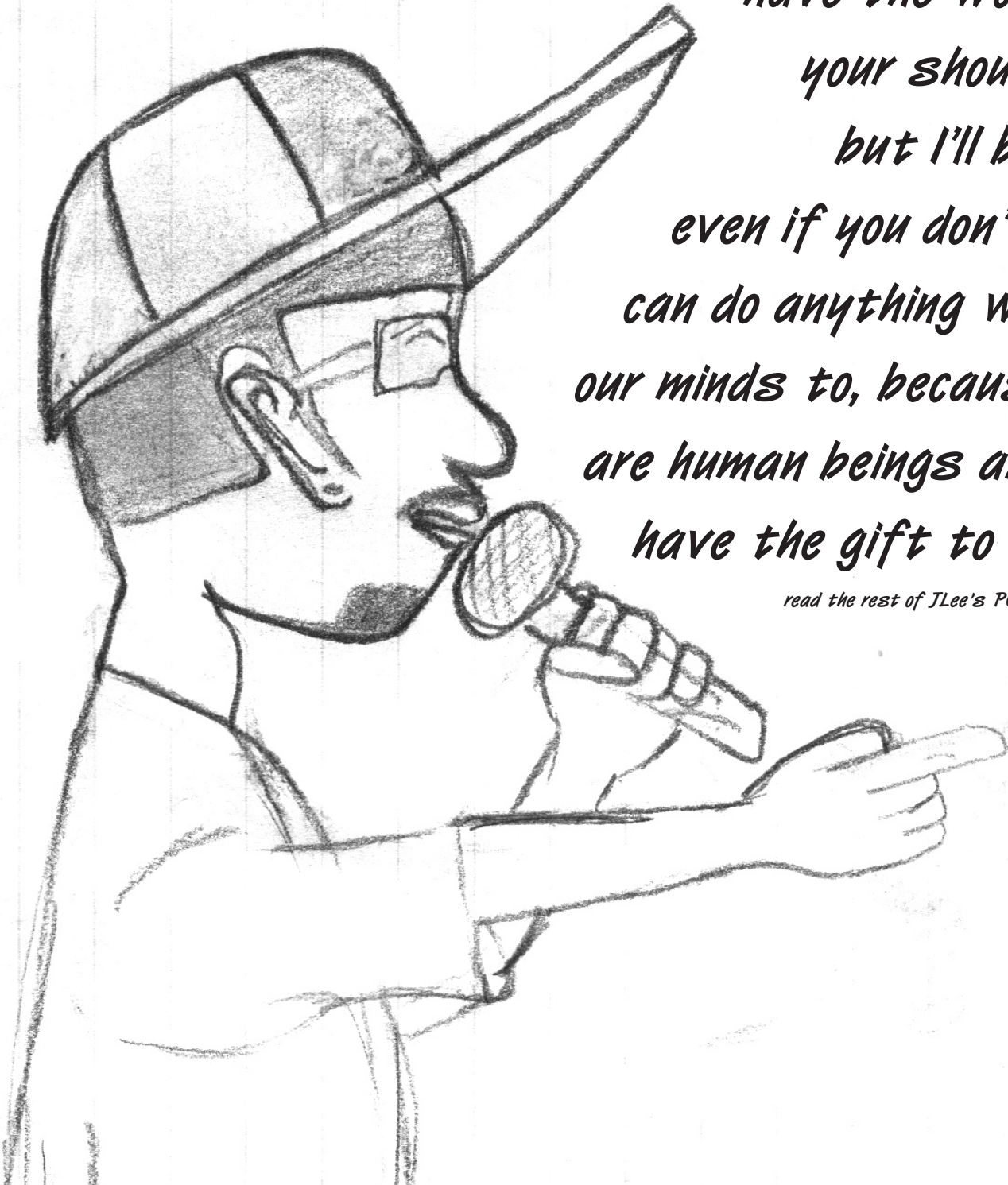




*It probably is hard
to believe if you
have the world on
your shoulders,
but I'll believe
even if you don't. We
can do anything we put
our minds to, because we
are human beings and we
have the gift to do so.*

read the rest of JLee's POW on page 12



Time is of the essence... This editor has twenty-plus minutes to write this editor's note, then send it off to our great colleague Michael Kroll to read and OK, to add to or subtract from, and to "drop" in The Beat for publication. This editor is sitting in a café in Washington DC with Beat colleague Alex Moe. We are one hour plus away from starting up the second round of workshops with the young writers at Oak Hill Juvenile Detention Center in Laurel, Maryland. We're sure a number of you read their work back in issue 13.31 and also saw the Labron James cover art in last week's 13.32 issue, which was given to us by an Oak Hill resident.

OK, it's a hot muggy day in the nation's capital. The Democratic Convention is off and running in Denver, Colorado. Did any of you catch the first night? Did you see an ailing Ted Kennedy, Senator from Massachusetts and brother of President John Kennedy, speak to his peers? Despite a brain tumor, he looked strong and gave a powerful speech. Did you watch Michelle Obama, wife of the first African-American ever nominated by one of the two major political parties to be President of the United States, speak to the crowd, then introduce her two small children to thundering applause? Powerful stuff to say the least. We found it quite emotional. History in the making.

The quadrennial event (every four years) continues for the next three days. Tonight, former First Lady Hillary Clinton speaks to the delegates, split almost evenly between her and Barack Obama. Her supporters, who are as passionate about her as Obama's supporters are passionate about him, want a chance to cheer for the woman who might have been (and still might be four or eight years from now) the first woman ever elected President of the United States. She will give them what they want... then tell them to go out and work for the election of Obama. There will be many tears along with the many cheers.

But enough of what's going on in Denver with the Democratic Convention. (The Republicans will nominate John McCain for President next week in St. Paul, Minnesota.) Allow this editor to take you on my own little journey thus far...

I left from San Francisco International Airport alone. I was supposed to go with a colleague who, unfortunately, bailed at the last minute. I haven't heard from him, but we gather it was the criminal justice system that held him back, or maybe himself? Only he knows, since there has been no word from him, yet.

This editor is becoming pretty darn good at traveling; this is our fourth trip to DC. This editor flew Virgin America, which I highly recommend. The flight isn't too bad. It's under five hours to get to DC, but of course it is challenging to bring two heavy boxes of Beats, your luggage, computer — and the weight of your program and even your own personal life. I'll get by.

Anyhow, I normally do not like to write in the first person, but I see that is where this editor's note is going so enjoy the ride as I get through this note.

I arrived in DC by 9 pm, to the comfortable confines of the oldest hotel in the DC area, the Hotel Harrington. Yes, I give it a thumbs up! It was a hot muggy night. It was in the low 90s, yet humid.

After settling in, I set out to get some food. I didn't go far, I walked right into Harry's Bar and grabbed a couple beverages and a cheeseburger and fries. I pulled up to a seat at the bar, and listened to the few patrons at the bar talk sports. No one in the bar was talking political convention. Instead, they were talking about the closing of Yankee Stadium in New York, while ESPN blasted on the television, competing with the 1980s rock 'n roll music in the background. Regardless, the food and drink, even the ambiance, hit the spot. Even though I'd had a long day of traveling, I was still wide-awake, so I went to my room and watched convention coverage until I eventually fell asleep.

This morning was a challenge to get up. I had hoped to do a bunch of edits, but that was not the case, so I want to apologize to writers in Santa Clara County and Alameda County for not getting their writings into this fabulous 13.33 issue! We PROMISE your work will be featured in

our next issue, that being 13.34. This is the hard part of doing this work and not having a lot of people to help out. I am grateful for the incredible amount of work Michael and Omar are doing, as well as Manen, who lays out this incredible publication. This is a work of love from all of us, not just the names mentioned, but every single name in our masthead. Trust us on that one. I am also grateful to get our colleague Kim Nelson on board to help with reading and editing The Beat this week, otherwise there would be even more units not included in this issue. She truly stepped up his week. Thanks Kim.

Well Beat readers, this is not only an historic year hopefully for the Democrats (apologies to McCain supporters, if there any reading this fine magazine), it has been and continues to be a meaningful and important year for us at The Beat Within. The art book, the new connections, the additional funding from new partners, the new colleagues, the new facilities, and now a presence hopefully here in DC during a time for big change! We can only hope that Obama will be in the oval office come January 2009. We all need to do our part and vote come November; it's only weeks away! Anyone 18 years old or older who hasn't already done so should register to vote. It's truly important!

Well, as you can see, it's hard for us old political junkies to get our minds off the pageant that may determine our leader for the next four or eight years and, with hope, change the course of the country and the world. So let us shift gears, and tell you about the great writing in this great issue on these three great topics.

The first topic is: "With eyes closed" — There is a song by the Beatles that says, "Living is easy with eyes closed." What do you think they meant by this statement? Why is living harder with your eyes open than with your eyes closed? Or is it? Have you lost opportunities because your eyes weren't really looking at things as they are? Have your experiences — from the loss of homies on the street, to hustling, to being locked up here — made you see things any differently than you used to? In what ways? Are your eyes opening to a new reality? What do you see now that you didn't see before?

Next we asked our writers to address "The last hug". Who is the last person who gave you a hug? Was the occasion happy or sad? Was it a hug of greeting, a hug of parting, or "just a hug?" Were there tears or smiles, laughter or frowns? What were you feeling when this person gave you a hug? What were you thinking? What do you think the person who hugged you was feeling and thinking? So tell us everything you can remember about that last hug...

The final topic in this issue is "Who believes in you?" — We know you must be sick of people predicting bad things for your future. Whether it's someone in your family telling you, "You're going to end up just like your dad," or a counselor telling you that there's a cell waiting for you in state prison, or an angry Beat facilitator who gets to walk out after a workshop while telling you that you can't...

As for this editor, not sure what the rest of the week has in store. We have four writing workshops to do at Oak Hill. We have a couple of funding meetings and a big presentation with the local community providers. I can only hope by the time I get on a plane back to the city by the bay, I will be feeling quite satisfied with Alex's and my effort with getting The Beat Within on the map in Washington DC. You can't say we are taking the "right steps" because these are the first steps. We are trailblazing, creating the blueprint, and once this is completed, it will be a very special chapter in our Beat book, the book that one day will truly tell the story of how this tiny program out of San Francisco took the country by storm... shoot, at least the criminal justice system. You are powerful writers who unfortunately find yourselves knee deep in the system, yet do an incredible part in telling your story to The Beat community with the hope of saving our future, and yours! Props to you all!

This issue goes out to you all whom I mentioned in this editor's note. You know who you are and you are not forgotten.

See you in the next issue!! Thinking good thoughts,....

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Omar Turcios

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Carolyn Goossen, Jill Wolfson, Allan Martinez, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clarke, Brittany Bernard, Alex Moe, Hanif Bey, Brenda Navarro, Samantha Navarro, Victor Peterson, Laura Vitaro, Justine Palefsky, Karla Serrano, Alissa Blackman, Angel Ryono, Elizabeth Crawford, Morghan Velez Young, Siliva Mortenson, Kolby Hanson, Sam Peterson, Kim Nelson, Alfredo Garcia, Mai Devavana, Lauren Stroud, Oscar Peña Jr., Julia Scheinbeim, Ava Benezra and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecowski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Carissa Allen, Antoinette Flores, Mr. B., Tammie Utter, D. Scott Herrmann, Connie Pyburn, Ph. D. Clinical Director, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County Juvenile Detention & Youth Services Center Beat Staff: Steve Serna

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www.thebeatwithin.org
www.myspace.com/theofficialbeatwithin

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: It's been a long while... We always appreciate when counselors take a few minutes and step up and write with The Beat Within. This week we have our dear friend Elena, who is a Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall Counselor. From the following piece it sounds to us as if she has already done some 'traveling' and figured out a few things about her life. May the road go on and on.

So Many Roads

Wow, looking at the map, so many roads to take.
 Using my imagination: shapes of snails,
 constructing, and nails. I've made my foundation.
 The anchor will provide safety when I need to stop.
 I enjoy silence. It does not corrupt my mind.
 To God I pray for guidance, and strength, down to my bones.

There are no secrets that can disturb me.
 And the lightning in the sky can be so beautiful.
 I continue my trip, leaving only memories behind.

-Elena, Santa Cruz Counselor

Gaze

With eyes closed,
you see nothing realistic,
you only see
the happiness that's not there,
and the way you want it to be.

With eyes closed,
you feel the hope,
and can see the sun dry the rain,
but when you open 'em back up,
it's back to stormy days.

With eyes closed,
you are free,
no cells, no pain,
no hood, no loss,
with everything to gain.

With eyes closed,
you are blind,
and those who don't see are lost.
In my life you close your eyes,
and you will pay the cost.

So I live life
with eyes open
even as I gaze
into my dreams and thoughts.

-M

From The Beat: We will all pay a huge cost if we live with our eyes closed, (though perhaps not imminent danger...) that of missing our life--lost in the limited arena of our fear, and closed off from all the vitality and beauty of life. It's important to be able to look inside ourselves as well as out into the world.

All I Can Do Is Move Forward

Sitting in these halls
nothing to do but stare at blank walls.
Not knowing how long I will have to suffer
could be just another couple of weeks
could be up to ten years--
damn, by that time I'd be a grown man!
I thought I would be long gone by then,
out of this awful country.
If only I could turn back the clock,
should have made better choices
but, instead, let my anger
get the best of me.
Now, sittin' here, I know what to do.
No point in lookin' back,
only room to move forward.
I know I won't be back.
For when I get out
I'm a change the way I live.
As Bob Marley once said
"Just can't live that negative way
Make way for the positive day"
Watch out, here I come, world!
What I did was wrong
but I cannot change it back.
So all I can do is move forward.

-Young Thai, Marin

From The Beat: You have a good attitude. Sometimes you can learn from what you did wrong without being punished by anyone else. Now you know that when you hurt someone because you're angry, it just compounds the pain and makes you feel weak and worse. Bob Marley also said, "None but ourselves can free our mind."

The Last Hug

The last hug was from my mom. The hug meant a lot to me. It was a good and sad feeling. It was good 'cause I got it from my mom, and she still supports me even if I did wrong. The sad part is I only get it once and I can't see her 'cause I'm locked up in here.

I never thought it would feel so good to hug my mom and see her face. There were tears with it too, from both of us, 'cause we both love each other with all of our hearts. I was feelings bad 'cause I had to see my mom at a bad place for only 30 minutes. That nothing.

What was running through my mind was I should have never done that mistake I did. I think my mom was feeling sad 'cause she doesn't like to see me sad and crying. But it was my fault and I have to handle it myself. All I wish is to give my mom a hug on the outs, and be with her for the rest of my life.

-J-Rhydah, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sorry you and your mom had to visit under these circumstances, but we're glad that you have that support and love. Now it's up to you to show your mom how much you love her by not doing the things that let the system take you from her. What are you planning to do differently on the outs that will keep you there?

Making My Dream Come True

A lot of people believe in me. My mom, my favvy, my boyfriend, and most of all myself. I know they believe in me because no matter what happens they always are there to encourage me to do better. Even if I keep messin' up, they never say I can't do it because they know I'm capable.

When I talk to them, they always tell me I will do better next time. I do believe in myself because I know I got a bright future. I know I can have a bright future. I know I will have a better future because I'm gonna graduate next year, the class of '09.

My dream is to be a fashion merchandiser so I can pick out the new fashion and sell it to Macy's or Bloomingdales. Or ill be able to sell it out of me own store.

-Michelle, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love to read that you will graduate from high school next year, and that you have real plans for a better life. We wish everyone was thinking about their future the way you have, and about the path that will take you to that better life. We'd love to see some of your fashion drawings.

With Eyes Closed

When you sleep your eyes closed, life goes by faster. It's more easier. And when you dream good thoughts, you wish it's real. But we all HAVE to wake up. When you do, your eyes open to the reality around you.

I was living a dream my whole life, OGs telling me war stories made me want some of my own. I wanted respect, "wanting" that made me act and do things that made my mom frown. But I was still dreaming.

When I got in here and sobered up. I woke up. Eyes wide open to a new reality. I am aware of all my actions now. Now I realize that it was no dream that I was living, but a nightmare.

-Jeremy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The tragic truth is that children can so easily be led, and far too often in directions that take them down dark holes. Their youth (too often combined with mind-altering substances, including alcohol) leads them into situations they should never have to deal with. Then, when they begin to mature, they see things that they never saw before. By then, however, they're often addicted to drugs, to alcohol, to the streets, and to their homies. Did you get "sobered up" from chemicals, from your own immature thinking, or from both? Whatever, we applaud you for opening your eyes. Now, tell us where that newfound awareness will take you.

Gutta Shhh Part 1 (That Mirror Effect)

I'm finna jus' be all the way real an' let some animosity go. I'm a dunny, ninja, I ain't known to get my ass beat an' can't no ninja say they done shot me. I ain't sayin' it ain't gon' happen, but I'ma know it's comin'. It's that mirror effect all day. They ain't gon' neva stop makin' guns, but I do think they stopped makin' real ninjas, now how ya love that?

Make that money, don't let it make or control you, that's why it's ninjas locked up. Mos' of you ninjas that's beefin', y'all stupid ninjas, wanna do this shhh. You ninjas wanna kill otha Africans, an' I mean Africans, 'cause in Africa, ninjas used to sell otha ninjas from otha tribes (or sets.) An' I ain't claimin' to be American no more—they ninjas ain't doin' shhh fo' me.

Check this out. I been beefin' with this one ninja since I was thirteen, an' he about three years older than me. If it come down to it, it is what it is, but if I gotta go lookin' fo' 'im on some random shhh, then I ain't bein' real to myself. But if he come my way an' he pull somethin', then I'ma defend myself an' I ain't gon' say a hunnit percent of the time, but fo' a majority of the time, I be on my shhh.

An' the way I'ma be livin' when I touch down, ninjas jus' gon' have to catch me in traffic, but I got too much to live fo' to go lookin', not sayin' that I ain't, but if I do, I'ma have my reasons an' I'ma make it worth it, an' I ain't tryin' to intimidate or say I'm doin' shhh to nobody, I'm jus' givin' real ninjas an' fake ninjas along with da females a different way to look at shhh. I told y'all I'm a real ninja an' I say real ninja "thangs," an' I know God damn well God ain't put me here to give a four letter word about you fame hungry ninjas, man, straight up. I'm a get out an' take care of this fam or prolly make one, if my money where it's at.

An' look, when people got money in they face, they'll do anything you tell 'em to, fo' the right price, even snitch. I grew up in the dirt with them light red rocks, playin' in bushes and trees an' hidin' under cars, ridin' garbage cans an' Foodco baskets down the hill, an' I don't want my kids goin' through the same shhh, 'cause it ain't promised that everybody live to see another day, especially not another hype. I was the one that neva asked fo' too much, an'

when I did ask an' didn't get what I wanted, I stopped messin' with you. The only person I didn't do that with was my mom. I learned to get "it" on my own, 'cause bein' dependent would break a ninja' spirit on the "unda," and without a ninja' spirit, you gon' foreva be a broke ninja, as in unfixable, like anything somebody don't do, gon' mess with you.

If one of my dunnies' broke, I'm not gon' give 'im money, I'll buy 'im somethin' from the sto' or somethin', but sooner or later he gon' have to drink some dunny water and man up, or stay in the house.

An' for real, I think I needed this, 'cause now I got time to sit down an' plan an' map my future out, 'cause I heard if you fail to plan, then you plan to fail. Once again, that mirror effect.

An' anotha thing I said in my rap that I wanted to bring up was that Biggie an' Pac situation, 'cause I'll neva kill one of my dunnies ova a female.. I had a seven to eight-year relationship, but it was lightweight hard because of certain shhh we had to prove to each otha, an' trust takes a long time to fully gain.

I remember one day she asked me why I don't be cussin' her out when she hang up on me, an' the reason is 'cause I'm a real ninja. That shhh ain't gone get me nowhere, but me doin' that made her love an' respect a ninja more, and I think every time she hung up on me was a test, 'cause she don't know no otha ninja that didn't cuss her out. I jus' give her a couple days an' act like it neva happened.

If one of y'all ninjas find a female like that, do what I did an' see what it do. But I'm gonna kick this gutta shhh to the curb so they can drop it off in them apartments.

-Young Dunny, San Francisco

From The Beat: You put a whole lot of heavy reality into one essay. You make the point that you have too much to live for to go looking for trouble and we appreciate that attitude. Is there any way that older guy and you can get together and straighten out any mess between you, before you run into each other accidentally and real trouble jumps off? Have you passed a test with your special lady and stopped cussing her out, because you've learned that abusing her solves nothing? How did you convince this lady that she can trust you? Why don't you write an essay for The Beat that describes how Africans sold Africans, and how the word "American" makes you feel compromised? We hope your time out at the Ranch will let you plan a way to reconstruct your life so you'll earn the money you need outside the streets.

With Eyes Closed

Damn, there's some coo' topics today! With eyes closed, life seems a lot easier. For example, if I kick back and not think of reality, life will be a piece of cake. No problems, baby momma drama, loved ones passing, jobs, etc., etc.

But let me tell you... you open your eyes, and BOOM! Ha ha! You're stuck in reality with all the negativities of life. Whether you're Chicano like me, or black or whatever, we all go through some shhh in life. Everybody has problems and all we can do is get high and close our eyes to get away for a few minutes.

After we sober up, we hate it cause — HELLO — reality visits again. There's no getting away from this misery. But hey, we also have good times. Those are the best! The worst ones are the homies or loved ones passing. That's all though. Arato.

-Smirk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're used to Beat pieces that tell us how lame our topics are, not how cool they are! Thank you! Plus, you have done a wonderful job of explaining why all of us like to keep our eyes closed some of the time. The old expression, "Ignorance is bliss," comes to mind. Sometimes, it feels more comfortable just not to think about the consequences of our actions, so we close our eyes to them. The real problem is that our relief is only temporary, and often, we have added a whole new layer of grief to our lives by becoming dependent on the drugs or alcohol that have allowed to temporarily forget reality. It's a vicious circle, and one we hope you let go of. You're too good a thinker and too good a writer to befuddle your brain with polluting chemicals.

Street Mentality

Only if I just would have stayed in school and got more knowledge

But for some reason I don't see me making it through college

Instead I wanted to be on the streets makin' money the easy way

Now I'm in jail with no money but time to pay

I been on the streets too long

so it's gone be hard to lose the mentality

But when I come to jail I was slapped in the face by reality

As I sit and think I ask myself "Why do I hustle?"

I just want to make it out the struggle but I only find trouble

As I look in the mirror I can't really see no type of reflection

It's a cold world

so everywhere I go I make sure to carry my protection

-Young Art, Alameda

From The Beat: Why couldn't you see yourself in college? When we read this poem, and the other great writing you've published in our pages, we see someone who could succeed in college, and afterwards — someone who could be a young leader, a role model for young people. Take another look in that mirror, and this time we hope you see what we do.

Who Believes In You?

I am tired of people saying, "You'll be back." I'm tired of all these people always against me, thinking they know everything. To me, they want you to fail. They judge the way you look and what some papers say about you. They don't know me, and them papers say nothing about me.

There's lots of things in me that these people don't know. The thing that makes me so mad is that some of the things these people say came true.

I will prove them wrong by doing good and not coming back here. I'm tired of this place, I've changed, whether these people believe me or not. They can think what they want but I'm going to work on my goals when I get out.

The system keeps making my life worse. But there are people in my life. Caring loving people like my mom, who has faith in me. She never say or predict anything bad for me. She is always here for me. These are the kind of people that I'm thankful for and need in my life.

Sorry I disappointed you and everyone else. I'm going to make you guys proud when I get out.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: You express a lot of emotion in this piece, from anger to remorse. But what we like most about it is the passion to succeed. There is no greater gift, no greater "thank you" you could give to your mom than for her to see you as she has always imagined you, a responsible man, doing what he is supposed to do and not doing what he's not supposed to do. What anyone else predicts for you is of no importance at all compared to her certainty (and yours) of what you can be.

Positive Life

I'm trying get on the positive side get my life together, stop living in the stormy weather when it could be sunny forever.

I threw myself in the dirt got dirty for work.

Now it feels like as if a big star is stuck on my shirt.

I posted on the block I posted on the corner,

I had knocks rolling through

because I was the pharmaceutical owner.

I done all that but it was just a lil' scratch.

Now I'm back --

to show you that positive ninjas could live fat.

-Dat Savage

From The Beat: This is a pretty tight flow. We like the fact how you break it down that you use to do the negative things and didn't get you anywhere. And we also like the fact that you are being a leader by demonstrating to people that you can life fat and be a positive dude. Keep up that positive attitude.

My Eyes Were Once Closed, But Now They're Open

When I first came here I was mad and I thought that I was just wasting my time and my life. But now that I been here for over five months, I now see that there can be good in every situation, it's just what you make of it.

Since I been here I was able to accomplish lots of things that I wouldn't normally have been able to on the outs due to all the distractions in the free world.

Since I been in here I really do want to change, but in here and out there are two different places. Out there I am often gullible to go back to my old ways when I see an opportunity to come up easy...

-Dorin, Solano

From The Beat: We think that if you can realize the good in every situation you are really becoming empowered to make positive choices for your life. If you can realize the good in every situation you will focus on the light in life, and enjoy life more too—which really helps. Sometimes we are forced to stop and think for a minute—and what we come up with changes our life in ways we end up being grateful for.

Growing Up By Myself

Man, today is July 29 and my birthday is July 31. I'm gonna be 15. It might sound crazy, but I'm gonna celebrate it. I'm not celebrating 'cause I'm in jail. I'm doing it because god gave me the strength to live 15 years. I'm glad I still alive.

I didn't have no family because when I was first born I had crack in my system because my momma was smoking crack. So when I was born, CPS (Child Protective Services) took me away, so I never saw none of my family in my life and I probably never will. But god did this for a reason. It's all a test. Even getting locked up, that's a test too.

Yeah, I'm up in YGC (Youth Guidance Center), and don't know when I'm getting out. But even though I grew up with no family, I didn't let the streets ruin my life. They almost did, but I said no. I turned myself in after being on the run for like two months. I had finally realized that there ain't nothing on the streets for me, 'cause when I get 18, the same streets is gonna be there. And I tell you this: no human on this earth can outlast that ground outside, wherever you are.

My little saying is don't make a mess if you can't clean it up. That's like saying don't do the crime if you can't do the time. But all I'm trying to say is no matter how you grow up, god is going to be there for you, and he is going to give you what you need, not what you want.

But to all baby mamas and baby daddy, be there for your kid 'cause I know you don't want them saying what I'm saying, "I ain't got no family!"

Love y'all until next time.

-Stephaun, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're very impressed with the maturity you bring to this piece. When you look back, what do you think caused you to change your thinking and your actions? What were some of the things you thought about before you turned yourself in? Now that you've realized that the streets will outlive you (and that they don't really care who claims them), how do you think your future will be different?

Life

Wats up with it beat! Life is nothing but a test for me. Nothing on the planet can satisfy me but the love I get from others.

Everyone is always worried about their body, money, clothes, jewelry, and etc., knowing that everything on this Earth is going to be destroyed anyways, expect for our souls and spirits. Me personally, I don't really trip on the physical things on the Earth.

Life here is only a test to see if we as Neutrals (good and evil) should have eternal life in a place with no worries and problems. People always think or believe that they should live their lives in full while on this Earth having money as their master and thinking that it's the only thing they need, falling into hell's trap, while Satan uses every physical thing on this Earth to blind all the humans with weak minds.

There is someone on the Earth that is smartest in physical life but I'm the smartest in spiritual life. Most people think inside this Earth, and I'm one of the very few who think outside this Earth. For everyone out there, don't let this world run your life, this is nothing but a test, so think outside this Earth! O, and don't worry about all your money, clothes, jewelry, and etc., because it's all going to be destroyed.

-Shadow

From The Beat: We've never heard the term to think "outside this Earth," like to think "outside the box," it's original. How does your belief system help you in your life, to achieve, what we hope are goals as original as your writing? What are your goals in life? The big ones? The small ones? Today?

I Cried

Tear dropping down my face cause time get hard
 18th birthday that a ticket on a prison car
 I cried cause where I'm at is like living hell
 Sitting in the cell, hearing demon inside of my yell
 Some of my closest friends ain't even bother to write me mail
 It's like I'm invisible and deleted
 But it's all good cause I'm a stand up guy
 Life is full of surprise, I know god is on my side
 It's a bunch of bullshhh, when people say "real men don't cry"
 'Cause every night I drop down to my knees, asking God why
 Stanley Scott told me "a good run is better than a bad run"
 So I'm facing the consequences and becoming a man
 Time flies by, god teaches me to have accountability and integrity
 I deal with my problems cause these youngsters ain't takin' care of their responsibility
 Sometime I cried cause I feel cold and lonely
 Please god, answer my question. How long will they mourn me?

-Lil' Chopstick, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope that wherever you go, we won't have to mourn you because you will continue to be a part of our lives, through your poems and your writing, which is always, as you said, straight from your heart. As long as the system has to let prisoners send mail, you will always have a part of you that is free.

Reality Check

Ay, for real man, let's all get back to reality
 Why do young people have that robbing and killing mentality
 The thing I want back the most is my childhood
 18th birthday coming up and it ain't none good
 What I say to you is please don't follow that route
 'Cause these prisons going to let you know what you really about
 Let's all sit back and think how could we all get here
 From running the street, to the system try to make us disappear
 My good side coming out so I just try to make clear
 Cause my bad side that was putting my family in fear
 Don't we all agree when I say "nobody wants their family to get hurt"
 Now visualizing how your mom feel when you ending up on a shirt
 Or maybe locked away for a long time behind the prison wall
 Imagine how worried your loved ones get when they don't hear that phone call
 Yes I did a lot of things and make a lot of mistakes
 But when you do a reality check that's what separates the real and the fake
 People told me to keep my mouth shit and ears, eyes open
 I agree cause I want to see and hear the world changing, that's what I'm hoping
 Man I'm not hear to preach, teach or nothing
 But I wish everybody would do a realty check and find out what you really searching

-Lil' Chopstick, Alameda

From The Beat: This was one of your best poems yet. We know you paid a terrible price for your reality check, but the knowledge and wisdom you've gained is an inspiration to all of us, the facilitators, the staff, and also the thousands of young people who read The Beat each week. Keep teaching.

Life

Things been messed up for me in the past couple of months. They have been the worst months of my life.

Two days before summer even started, I got a call from my friend. We were going to go to the studio to make a song and he asked, "Where are you at?"

I told him I was at school. He asked me when school was out, and I told him 12. He said he was going to come up and get me. But he came early because he wanted to go to the studio. I was in school, so I didn't know he was up there.

I heard some shots. Another student came in and said someone got shot in front of the school. The first thought in my head was, "It's my friend." I called his phone and he didn't answer. I called like seven more times. Then I called my other friend and told him to call.

They had the school locked down. School got out and I ran out to see. There was caution tape and an ambulance, but I didn't see my friend. I got a ride to my house. I told my other friend what had happened at school and that our friend wasn't answering his phone.

We went to his granny's house and she asked us why. We told her. The police saw we were worried and asked us if we were talking about him. We gave him a description.

That's when he told us. He said, "Your friend got shot and killed." His grandma and his auntie started crying.

I couldn't breathe. I thought it wasn't real. Ever since he died, everything's just been crazy. Like stupid crazy. I've been lost. That's why I'm here. It's hard up in here. I'm not about getting revenge. That ain't me. Every time I think of that shhh, I break down.

-Lik, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a tremendously sad piece to read, which makes us understand at least a little of what you are going through. Of course you feel "lost" and hurt. Whenever a person loses someone close to them to violence, it's like we have to re-invent the world and our place in it. We are so sorry this happened, and we hope you are able to talk about your feelings of confusion and depression with someone you trust who knows how to listen. The Beat is always here for you, if there's anything we can do.

Open Your Eyes

As you take the bullet to your head
 you end up 6 feet under, dead.
 Now you're gone wit no one to your side
 homies saying they were down to ride...
 Going to your funeral to show respect
 it's all a rotation when you join the set.
 In and out they join the game
 you die it's a rap you can't show no shame.
 Your little homies tryen to show pride
 so they stick wit their older homies to their side.
 Little homies putting in work onda streets
 you see um onda streets tryna creep,
 tryen to get ready for wen da time comes
 there's no warning, it just happens, then you're gone.
 It's a cold game, unless you playen it rite
 little homies don't know thoe until it gets tite.
 But soon they'll know, their time will come
 they'll end up like the older homies, lonely and gone.
 And who would be there by your side?
 Only your family, and you see em is cry—
 you're in a casket 6 feet deep.
 Think about wat you're doin
 until you hit da game too deep...

-Lady Happy

From The Beat: We also know many whose families cry for them, and who cry for themselves as they lose their lives in prisons everywhere. We appreciate your break down of the process as you know it. We hope you are doing some serious thinking about what you are planning for your life.

Your Life Will Change In A Blink Of An Eye

It's a strange thing. Your life can change in the blink of an eye. Everything, every small thing that you do will affect you.

Should I do this? Should I not go with this person? Everything. Being sent away from the place you love, to a place where you have to go for a period of time. Your life comes down to one line on 'one person's shoulder' metaphorically speaking. When you are sent somewhere like prison, you have time to think.

I have realized what I have done. It's gone. It's a strange feeling as you walk towards the courtroom, waiting, waiting to see if the judge will be merciful. You would start to tremble as the final verdict is spoken. It's a sense of loss, rage, and confusion you remember when you came here as your lawyer speaks, presents what he has to say to the judge.

And then your eyes start to water up. To me it was the longest moment of my life. Seconds were minutes, which seemed like hours. Just waiting as your heart hammers in your chest. You start to sweat as the decision comes down. Your life will change in an instant. No matter what decisions you make. Remember that . . .

-Everything

From The Beat: You do a great job describing the emotions that pump through your body while you're inside the courtroom. You're absolutely right about your life changing in a matter of seconds. Life is all about the decisions we make. If we make a lot negative decisions than we would have a lot negative results. But if you decide to live in a more positive way, you can make of life what you really want to.

Can't Hide

You can't hide behind the Bible
When I'm rocking with my disciples
Eyes on that scope on top of that rifle
You either make it or fail and that's how life go
Sort of like them contests on American Idol
One way or the other you going sleep in the dirt
Whether you run the streets or go to church
On every street corner is were evil lurks
And on every street corner is where people work
So think what you want to or go off what you know
When death look you in yo' face will you have faith or hope
I got one question why is there dope
And where was God when crackers were putting black people necks in ropes?

-Bill Gates, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a brilliant poem, about one of the oldest questions man has ever faced: If God exists, how can there be suffering? This is something that believers and non-believers ask themselves and try to answer in their own ways. Do you have an answer for your own question?

If...

If Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy were still alive, they would be entirely disappointed with how the current government is running the United States. Or how police officials and institutional peace officers racially profile us as gang members by the way we dress, our associations, or the color of our skin. They would be astounded by the way the government has corrupted us, and by how easily they can frame minorities for murders they didn't commit. And they'd be especially surprised by how many prisons and institutional programs have been constructed.

Since the 1970s we have doubled the amount of prisons and juvenile hall facilities, hoping that in doing so we would lower criminal activity and make the streets a safer place.

What MLK, Cesar Chavez, Malcolm X and RFK would have wanted us to achieve is a system in which we could expand our thoughts and insinuate our ideas of equality into the culture.

-Bd, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully written. There must be more where this came from. Lay it on us.

Stress Out About Everything

What's up Beat? This ya' boy Twin. Today I am going to talk about why I am stressing? One reason is because I haven't seen my twin. Whenever I start to think about him I start to cry because I want to be with him on the outs so bad. And I want me and him to do right so we don't have to come back to the hall.

The second reason I am stressing is because I miss my mom and my grandpa, my little baby brother, and my baby mama too. I hate when my mom comes to see me with my little baby brother. I cry when they come, and when they leave. My little brother wants to come with me but he can't because he has to go the other way. And when he goes the other way he calls my name Bra Bra and starts crying. That's one of the big reasons why I am really stressing.

And the third reason why I am stressing is because I go to court this week and I don't know if I'm going to go to CYA or ROP. And the other reason is my baby mama is about to have my baby and I am in here. I feel so bad for her because she didn't get pregnant by herself. I am suppose to be on the outs helping her get ready to have my baby, instead of being in here.

When I get out, wherever I go, I am going to do my best not to come back here. I want to go back to the regular life I use to live when and before I started doing my crimes I was doing.

Also me and my brother are hella good at baseball. I hope one day me and my brother can get our shhh together and be together and play baseball and make my grandpa happy. Me and my brother can go pro. That's all to the Beat for this week. I want to say that I love my whole family both of my brothers and my baby mama.

-Donavan

From The Beat: You can do anything you put your mind to. We see that you've recognized the mistakes you've made. Learn from them and don't keep repeating them! We're glad to hear you really speak from the heart and are not afraid to admit that you cry and show your true emotions. You have a lot to turn your life around for, batter up!

Lavelle

With my eyes closed, I had walk in this world, not really knowing,
Blind folded
I used to travel, not really knowing where I was going,
What I was searching for, it did not matter at the moment,
I was blind to see the beautiful things life had plan for me,
I didn't know what it was to be free,
Till the day god sent you to me,
Reality came to me, time passed too fast when you were next to me,
Wow! Life took you away from me,
Look baby girl, in this world shhh happen, shhh you don't want or plan,
Shhh that I'm going through, in a jail cell without you,
24/7, missing you,
Not a day had forgot of you,
Like a dream one day, I will always love you,
And be there for you, till the day I die,
Without you I will cry.

-Diablito, San Francisco

From The Beat: It must be so hard to look back on the mistake that brought you here and realize how easy it was to avoid — and how terrible the consequences both for you and Lavelle. We hope that this is the last time you let your emotions take over your reason so that you never have to experience this neo-slavery system again! Of course you need Lavelle in your life, but she needs you a whole lot more!

My Mom's Drug

The drug that I think is the worst drug is meth & crank.

My mother was so into her drug that she left me and my family. I feel responsible for her not being in my life or my dad's and my sister's lives, because I was the one who told her I did not want her in our lives any more. She would say she was going to come and see me and my sister, and she was never where she said she would be, and my little sister would cry herself to sleep.

She was not there to hear her pain or feel her tears. It was me and my dad that were there, not my mother. So I told her that I did not want to see her - no matter what.

Please, don't ever tell your parents you don't want one of them in your life. Now I don't know where my mother is, or if she is still alive. I regret saying that.

-Samantha, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You were in pain. That was a terrible thing to have to see. You had a right to expect more of your mother. We hope she is recovering, somewhere, and that she is safe, and that one of these days, you'll hear from her. In the meantime, you need to take care of yourself, so you can get home and help your dad take care of your sister.

Who Believes In You

I know my family believes in me because every time I get in trouble they tell me they expect more of me or I could've made a better choice then what I did. My family is always in my corner. For good or for bad they are on my side.

Most people you can only let down so many times before they stop believing in you. If you choose to keep doing wrong people expect you to do wrong and end up in jail. So you really can't blame them for not believing.

Would you believe in someone who keeps letting you down in so many different ways. But when people believe in you it helps you believe in yourself and try to do better.

-Trying

From The Beat: This is a great piece. You really break it down for people and it explain to them why would someone believe in someone who keeps letting them down. And it's the truth. And on the flip side you said it too, "But when people believe in you it helps you believe in yourself..." We all need some kind of encouragement to help us do better and strive for bigger goals.

Back In The Halls

My name is Deontae and I'm back in juvenile. I'm really finna stop coming here. I can't keep coming here because I'm getting tired of the staff keep telling me what to do — when I have to take showers and eat. I'm getting tired of this stuff.

I just had a job. I was finna get off probation and I messed that up. But it's good. I'm learning my lesson, though, and I really got to stop taking it as a game. I'm young now, but when I get older, I'm going to be with the big boys in jail or prison. That's why I got to stop coming here.

My mom keep going through it. This stuff is over with because I'm tired of sleeping in this place. This stuff has to be over with because I can't keep going through this stuff. I'm finna change my life and stay out of here. I'm trying to get off probation because this stuff is stressful. But I'm finna change my life.

-Deontae, San Francisco

From The Beat: It always makes us very unhappy when we read a piece with the words, "I'm back..." We're sure that each time you left this place, you told yourself that you would never be back. So tell us, why is this time going to be different? What is the hardest thing for you about staying out? Whatever that one obstacle to freedom is, that's where you should focus your attention so you don't have to change your entire life, just that one thing that keeps putting you back in the box.

Ese Lugar De Paz

Oh, recuerdo un lugar donde me sentía tranquilo. Era un lugar donde se respira paz y las personas se ayudan mutuamente. Es donde trabajó mi abuela, es un lugar seguro. Ella trabajaba en un asilo para personas mayores. Ella les hace la comida, aseo y muchas actividades que no cualquiera ser humano puede hacer por alguien.

Recuerdo que nis lebantabamos a las 5 de la mañana a resar, luego a desayunar a las 7. Despues del desayuno, yo ayudaba en la limpieza y luego el resto del día, hacía diferentes actividades.

Recuerdo el lugar se llama, "Ciudad Blanca". Es un lugar muy bonito donde hay muchos árboles y por ahí pasa el río llamado "Río Hondo". Ahí se respira paz y amor entre todas las personas. Algún día voy a volver ahí. Sólo pienso salir de aquí lo más pronto posible con la ayuda de Dios.

Lo qué me hace ser diferente a los demás es que siempre tengo fe en cualquier actitud que me propongo. Le agradezco a Dios por todo lo que me da, sea bueno o malo. No mas pienso volver a lo mismo. Espero salir de aquí. Quiero ser diferente y no volver a las calles.

From The Beat: No hay cosa tan maravillosa como sentirse feliz haciendo cosas positivas par alas personas que necesitan ayuda. Algún día la vida te va premiar por los tipos de actos humanos que haz hecho en tu vida. Ese lugar definitivamente que se escuchar de pura paz y seguro. A lo mayor el propósito de tu vida es ayudar a las personas que has estado ayudando. Estamos orgulloso de tus actos.

That Peaceful Place

Oh, I remember that place where I would feel relax. It's a place where you feel peaceful and people help themselves. It was a place where my grandmother worked, a safe place. She worked in a senior's institution. She would take care of them by cooking, cleaning up, and others activities any human being isn't able to do.

I remember that we would get up at 5 in the morning to pray, then to have breakfast at 7. After breakfast, I would help my mom with the cleaning, and then I would do others activities.

I remember that the place is called, "Ciudad Blaca." It's a beautiful place where is surrounded by trees, and it's near a river called, "Río Hondo." You can breathe peace, and love throughout the people that live there. Someday, I'll go back over there. I'm just waiting to get out of here soon with the help of God. '

What makes me different from others is that I have the faith in always doing what I propose to myself. I thank God for all He gave me, good or bad. I hope not to end up in the same thing. I hope to get out of here. I want to be different and never come back.

-Rosny, San Francisco

From The Beat: There isn't such as thing than feeling proud of doing positive things like helping others who need help. Someday, life will repay actions you gave back to those people. That place defenetly sound very peaceful and very safe. Maybe the purpose of your life is to help people in need like the people you have helped. We are proud of your actions.

To mom
i love you

Un Tonto O Un Padre

Pues esto quiere dar a entender sobre los padres que embarazan a una mujer y los dejan abandonados a su suerte. La verdad es que estas personas no se le deberían de llamar padres.

En mi persona, todavía no he vivido algo así, pero para el futuro mi meta es ser un padre real. Lo que significa es esforzarte en darle lo mejor a tu hijo en cada etapa de su vida desde el día que nazca hasta el día que decida salir de la casa. Eso significa darle una buena educación y que trate de ser lo mejor para que salga adelante y logre lo que quiere.

La joya de la familia es mi tío Raul. Es una buena persona. Lo que he aprendido es que es un hombre trabajador, que sabe lo que quiere y lucha. Por eso, día a día, para la familia el papel que juega es respeto. El siempre muestra respeto y enseñanza a la familia.

El riesgo mayor es tomar. Esa aventura. Cuando vienes para acá a los Estados Unidos, uno sabe el riesgo que corre, que puedes perder la vida, que el tren te puede cortar una mano, un pie, o ambas cosas, puedes hasta quedar inválido. Ese riesgo es bueno porque lo que uno busca es lo mejor para la familia y Dios sabe de nuestros pensamientos y El nos hace salir adelante.

From The Beat: Tienes buenos pensamientos en como ser un padre. Esperamos que siempre conserves la forma de pensar. Desafortunadamente existen personas que no toman responsabilidades en los hijos. Nos imaginamos que tú tío Raul fue el quien te enseñó a como ser un gran padre o es que también tubistes el ejemplo de padre como tú lo has escrito. Deberías de seguir el ejemplo de tu tío. ¿No te gustaria ser recordado y respetado como él? Está todo en ti.

A Fool Or A Father

Well this means those who get woman pregnant and abandon them. The truth is that they shouldn't call these people fathers.

In my opinion, I haven't lived something like this, but for my future, my goal is to be a real dad, which means that I'll make a big effort in giving my son the best in every phase of his life since he is born until the day he leaves the house. That means to provide him a good education and to try to give the best to make him succeed and get what he wants.

The jewelry of my life is my uncle Raul. He is a good person. I've learned from him to be a hard working person that knows what he wants and fights for it. That's why, day by day, for the family he plays the role of respect. He always shows respect and wisdom for the family.

The major risk is to drink. It's an adventure. When you come to the US, you know about the risk you will take. You can lose your life, risk from the train can cut your hands, your feet, or both. You can even end up disabled. That's a risk you take because you have to look for the best of your family, and God know about out thoughts and he helps us to move on in life.

-Alex, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have good thoughts about being a father. We hope you always keep this way of thinking. Unfortunately there are people who don't step up to take responsibility for their actions. We believe that your uncle was the responsible one to teach you how to be a good father like the one you've described. You should apply his example to your life. Wouldn't it be fun and give you pride to be respected like he was? It's all up to you.

Lo Que Deje Por Venirme

Pasando en la juvenile no es problema para mí porque aunque me deporten me voy a volver ha venir para San Francisco porque la necesidad que nos obliga a todos los inmigrante es bien grnde. Nos venimos desde desde Honduras porque tanta necesidad que nisiquiera tenemos para cmer bien y vestimos decentes porque hay tanta pobreza, corrupción y tantas drogas que hacer todas estas cosas.

Quiero que sepan que a mí no me importa que me regresen de nuevo para Honduras porque soy de la calle y mis padres me han enseñado a no vencerme porque las esperanzas son las últimas que se pierden.

También les quiero contar algo de mí vida. Yo me llamo Carlos y cuando tenía a mi padre vivo, yo siempre le contaba a mi padre lo que yo quería ser cuando era grande. Un día le dije a mi padre que me quería venir a los Estados UNidos porque estaba cansado de tanta pobreza. Yo quería poderlo ayudarlo y con mucha tristeza me dijo, "hijo, no te vayas, no me dejes solo." No le hice caso y me vine. Ahora me encuentro encerrado entre cuatros paredes y unos cuantos barrotes de hierro. No me aguito porque soy de la calle. Me gusta la loquera, la mota y el polvo blanco y es mi historia sobre los inmigrantes.

Les quiero decior que no se aguiten porque las esperanzas son las últimas que se pierden en esta vida.

From The Beat: Tomastes una decision muy grande en tu vida la cual no dio fruto. Si tú dejastes a tu padre solo, ha de haber sido por un gran propósito. Ese propósito se nota que no dilató mucho. Para la próxima vez, si vas a arriesgar mucho, hazlo por algo buen y haciendo lo bueno. Piensa en las personas que quieres y en lo que quieren para ti. No te arrepientas despues cuando ya no tengas a tu padre contigo. "Uno no sabe lo que tiene hasta que lo pierde." Recuerda eso.

What I Left To Come Here

Being in juvenile hall is not a problem to me because even if they deport me, I'll come back to San Francisco because the need that obligates to do so is huge. We come from Honduras because of the needs, hunger, the need to wear clothes, poverty, corruption and a lot of drugs that make us do things like that are the reason we come here.

I want you to know that I don't care if they send us back to Honduras because I am from the streets and my parents have thought me to never give up because hopes are the last thing we can loose.

I also want to share something about my life. My name is Carlos and when I had my father alive, I would tell him what I wanted to do when I grow up. One day, I told my dad that I wanted to come to the US, because I was tired of poverty. I wanted to help him. With so much sadness he told me, "my son, don't go, don't leave me alone." I didn't listen to him and I came here. Now I am behind bars. I don't get down because I am from the streets. I like to get high, weed, and powder. This is my story about immigrants.

I want to tell you not to get worried because hope is the last thing you should loose in life.

-Carlos, San Francisco

From The Beat: It was a big decision you took in life that didn't give a good result. If you left your dad alone, it must have been for a big purpose. And that purpose didn't last long. For the next time, if you are going to give away so much from your life, do it for something valuable and do it right. Think about those you love and what they want for you. Remember this, "you never know what you got until you loose it." Don't let this happen to you.

I want to tell you not to get worried because hope is the last thing you should loose in life.

Do Your Probation

'S'up with The Beat? Still up in this thang! Bored as hell! Don't even know what to write about. But I do know I'm ready to get up out this thang though. I'm ready to be on probation. At least one of my foster parents came to see me almost every day.

If they let me go to my foster home, I know I could finish that bullshhh probation. But is y'all gone do y'all probation? 'Cause really, I'm ready for probation. I will never be ready for a group home or the Ranch. Forget the Ranch! And the grouper. Never will I do that shhh. It won't help me and it probably won't help a lot of us.

But for real, if you ready to do y'all probation and they let you out on probation, handle that. So you could be official. 'Cause you could do that lil' shhh 'cause it's only a lil' amount of your life. What is a year when I been alive 16 of them thangs? I could do one sober could you? Hopefully, 'cause it will help ya in the long run!

Well anyway, I'm out Beat. Stay up. Whiteboy out.

-Whiteboy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire most of your advice. But at the same time, be careful what you say you will NEVER do. If part of your probation is to be done in a group home, then how can you do your probation "sober" but never be ready for a grouper or the Ranch? It sounds like you're ready to accept reality, but part of that reality might very well be a period of time in a place you don't want to be. We hope if that happens, you do the smart thing...

Story For My Girl

Mija wants to be a gangsta.
 She wants to roll with the thugs.
 The varrio is all she loves.
 She wants to hang with the Gs and tour the big city.
 I met her back when she didn't bang.
 She was hella straight.

I knew her dad was a police.
 Maybe that's why she didn't hang with the homies.

I think she dug a bunch of cholos,
 getting down and dirty, on these streets.

I watched how she dropped out of class,
 ung out in the lane where the world moves fast.

Mija got a gun but don't know how to shoot it, 'til she took her first cruise.

We had a conversation about affiliation and dying and incarceration.

She had her story about her downs and ups and what we both wanted to be
 when we grew up.

We took a cruise to the beach one time, and that's when we got into some shhh.

-Lil' Mono, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're going to hope that this is just a well imagined piece of fiction. And that you'll make your pen, or pencil, a very good friend. You've told a big story in just a few words, which is the mark of a good writer.

Daddy's Girl

Court today didn't mean anything. All they said was I'm still gonna be here. It was different though - my dad came. I haven't heard or seen him in three months. I've always been a daddy's girl, but ever since I did what I did, it doesn't seem like he loves me anymore. But when he hugged me goodbye he gave me a little kiss and said, "I love you". When he pulled away I saw that his eyes started to water. He turned and walked away. I can't believe what I've done. What I'll need to do now is fix it, 'cause I can't take it back. But it's good to know he still loves me.

-Sophia, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're very glad you got to see your dad, and that you realize he loves you. What's your plan to get your life back on track?

With Eye Closed

What I didn't see when I was on the outs was when my mom told me don't go out and mess with the law. She said, "Just go out have fun with you friends and don't do anything wrong." But my dumb ass went out got high and drunk, then went to go do a stupid thing and got myself in the hall.

Now when I'm in here, I'm thinking a lot on how if I just listened to my mom and just went out and had fun — and not do drugs and drink — I would be out there with my family having fun still. But now it opened my eyes being in here.

Now when I get out I'm going to listen to my mom and listen to whatever she tells me to do. All the time I didn't listen to her, I want to say I'm sorry. I'm dumb for not listening to you. You're my mom you know what is the best for me. I should have known that in the beginning. Now all I just want to say is I love you mom. I never meant to hurt and make you suffer for the things I did. I'm sorry.

-J-Rhydah, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope your eyes stay open once you get out of this place. It's much easier to promise that you'll listen to your mom when you have been taken from her than it is to keep that promise once you are back home. If you forget to listen to her, then you're very likely to face the same consequences that you're going through now. The fun that drugs and drink provide doesn't last long, and soon turns into pain and anguish. Telling your mom how much you love her is a good place to begin, but it's only a beginning. Now, you must show her!

Who Am I?

I'm the greatest thing since breath
 You thought I went but sorry, I never left
 I don't have to play the game - I'm a ref
 I'll leave you hooked like my middle name is meth
 But you don't have to smoke me
 You don't have to breathe me in
 But you do too much because you'll never breathe again
 If you don't got a homie I can be your friend
 I promise that I will be with you until the very end.

Who Am I?

Answer: The block

-Eugene, Alameda

From The Beat: Terrific poem as always, Eugene. Do you feel like you are hooked on the block? Or rather, if the block is the disease, what's the cure. What would a drug treatment center for block-addiction look like?

Who Believes In Me

A question I never had to ask myself,
 Jail is like being put in the back in the shelf

Double has never crossed my mind
 Nothing will ever separate your caring bind

All my life you've done nothing but be there,
 Your love is something impossible to bare

If there's one thing I could tell you mom and dad,
 Is that deep inside I'm really not bad

You always said through school I should get A's and B's
 Now that I'm in here I'm just crying on my knees

I know you all really care
 And of course you're always there

And of course I'll tell you one more thing that's nothing new
 "I love you!"

-SunShine-Dylan, Alameda

From The Beat: It seems like being locked up has done a lot to make you see how much love there is in your family. Were you blind to it before? Do you think you will remember all this when you get out? What led you down the wrong path before, and how will you avoid it?

Running From My Past

I have my good points but I also have my bad
 The thing that hurt me the most is seeing my mom
 through that glass
 I'm heading toward my future but I can't lie I'm running
 from my past
 I don't regret what happened to me, I'm just trying to get
 through
 Its times where I want to be alone cause I feel blue
 I thought I was on top of the world but now I'm below it
 Where they sending me if you scared you better not show
 it
 It took a long time to get used to this crazy ass place
 I'm the type of ninja that won't judge you from your race
 But I am gone judge you by the way you act
 I'm gonna let ya'll know that I'm a solid ass ninja and
 that's a fact

-Young Art, Alameda

From The Beat: What are you running from? And what are the parts of your past that you need to let go of, as you head towards what we hope is a brighter future. Where you're going it's stress, but you have the strength, the talent, and the heart to get through it!

Believe

I believe in myself, even when people don't believe in
 me. I believe in other people when they don't believe in
 themselves, because I look at it like it was myself. I know
 I could get through whatever I was facing and so can they.
 There's been times when I felt like no one believed in me,
 even when they did.

God believes in all. Whatever your interpretation of
 God is, it looks after you always. The universe, I feel, is
 on our side. People who struggle need to believe, if they
 don't believe already. It probably is hard to believe if you
 have the world on your shoulders, but I'll believe even
 if you don't. We can do anything we put our minds to,
 because we are human beings and we have the gift to do
 so.

The power of thought is a good thing to have. We can
 choose to do as we please and we have the choice to react
 to any given situation, so why not make the best out of
 what we have? It will make things a lot easier. Remember,
 believing is achieving, that's what my momma always told
 me. So I believe in life and in all that is possible.

-JLee, Marin

From The Beat: You're right to believe in yourself. You've already been through a lot in your young life, and now that you're almost an adult, it's wonderful that you have your faith to sustain you, and that you generously spread it to include others.

With Eyes Closed

Close your eyes and start to dream,
 Not knowin' what you have with your team,
 You're stuck in a world with one life,
 You feel the beat through the night,
 You sell, you buy, you're wastin' time,
 Says the system, "You're rightfully mine,"
 Open your eyes, you're in a cell,
 Now you know, you're livin' in hell,
 What you do, is what you did,
 Not fully thinkin', an adolescent kid,
 You're in your cell, so think tonight,
 No lookin' back, now open your eyes.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The line we like most in this tight poem is the one that acknowledges that, as an adolescent, you're not "fully thinkin'." That's true, but your words show us that you are moving out of adolescence and into responsible adulthood. We hope that thinking like an adult will move you away from this unfeeling system!

Fed Up

What's good with The Beat. Ey, yo' ninja really been down
 for a good long min. and I'm really fed up. I'm ready to get
 the hell up outta here, for real. I'm fighting this 707 shhh,
 and I was in court asking my lawyer hella questions. Yo,
 they be in there saying some other shhh. Most people
 don't be asking questions and just be in there stuck.

But damn, they really tryna play me. They talking
 about seven years in the Y, at least the most 25 in the
 pen. I ain't go lie. I'm lightweight shook, and hope that 25
 get out the picture fo' real, yo.

But I was in the hut really thinking, like I'm fed up
 with this jail shhh and ready to get on. I ain't coming
 back, fo' real. Like, I'ma try to be smooth when I get out.
 But I know it's go be a few obstacles.

All I ever knew was gang banging and thang slanging.
 What could I say? This the life I chose.

-Trill, San Francisco

From The Beat: The life "you chose" really chose you, and now you're paying the price. We also hope you shed that "25 in the pen" possibility, but whatever the outcome, we hope you take advantage of whatever you can to learn new skills and new ways of thinking so that, next time, you have more options to choose from.

Me, Myself And I

Q-Vo, Beat? Pues, the third topic caught my eye tonight.
 So, símon, someone who believes in me without a doubt
 is myself porque no matter what set of cards life deals
 me, I'll play 'em with perfection, with my head high.

I sav it out no matter what situation, porque there's
 always somebody waiting for somebody to fall. That
 thought right there keeps me motivated 'cause never will
 I let myself fall. I'd rather stand strong and keep it that
 way 'cause the pride I got for myself is eternal.

Orale pues, Beat, that's my thoughts for tonight. This
 jaina is out. Alrato.

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always admire your spirit, Grumpy, because it reveals an inner strength and pride of character. Those are wonderful qualities. But at the same time, we have to question your judgment if you think you're playing the hand that's been dealt you "with perfection." How does "perfection" lead to enslavement? That's a mystery we wish you'd explain to us.

Journalistic Morality

Before I got locked up, I was the Photography Editor of
 my high school newspaper. I was a good student, with a
 3.0 GPA at Tam High in Mill Valley, California.

After being locked up, I was charged as an adult. When
 a minor is charged as an adult, the press can legally write
 about them.

I would like to discuss the journalistic morality of
 publicly humiliating someone because by law you can.
 It is one thing if they have been proven guilty or have a
 laundry list of crime, but for someone who knows many
 people in many communities around the Bay Area, and
 has zero priors, writing about them is wrong.

The "Marin Independent Journal," as well as the
 "Point Reyes Light" will be hearing from me and many
 people from Marin County when I get out.

Writing about minors to sell a publication is not only
 wrong, but pathetic.

-Do, Marin

From The Beat: It's not illegal to expose the name of minors in any newspaper because there's no law prohibiting it, but you could argue, like many do, that it's indecent. When you get to go back to school and resume your role as photography editor, if you get any news stories trashing kids from your writers, will you speak up to cut those stories because you remember how it hurts and is humiliating to see your name exposed in print?

My Drugs

Before I was locked up, drugs were the most important things to me. More important than school, more important than taking care of my baby sister, more important than visiting family, spending time with them.

Drugs were my life; drugs were my oxygen; drugs were my key to happiness. But now that's all about to change.

-Allen. Santa Clara

From The Beat: We don't know how long you'll be behind walls, or how long you've already had to be drug-free, but we hope you build on this time and realize that drugs never were what you thought they were. They weren't your "life" but more likely your death; they weren't your "oxygen" but more likely your carbon monoxide; they weren't your "key to happiness" but your ticket misery, dependence and multiple trips to lock-up. It seems like you have now figured all this out for yourself, so please, stay sober!

My First Mind Was Always Wrong

Man it's crazy 'cause it seem like this topic was made especially for me. When I was out I wasn't in my right mind, I was doin' so much wrong. I wasn't thinking about consequences, just always followed my first mind.

And my first mind was always the wrong. I utterly felt unstoppable so therefore I was doing anything and everything. Things started to change when I came to this here jail. I started to think more clearly and my mind frame started to get more mature.

This jail made me change for the better so when I get out I'll be ahead of the game, and be able to do the right thing without running into trouble because my head's gonna be too strong.

But I'm more worried about today than tomorrow.

-Doug E Fresh, Alameda

From The Beat: Whatever challenges you face today are the ones that will strengthen you for tomorrow. Think of it as the pushups and practice before the big game, which starts the day you walk out the system's doors!

Who Believed In Me

When I was in the orphanage, the ladies from there were saying that I was going to end like my mom and dad. They were drinking a lot of alcohol.

My mom believes that I'm not going to end like my real mom and dad. I can see that she believe on me. I believe that I'm going to have the best future thanks to my mom.

-Edwin

From The Beat: We believe that you have a bright future ahead of you also. It's up to you to believe it too. 'Cause people can say what they want to say, but nobody can take your dreams or goals away from you. There will be obstacles, but don't let anything stop you from accomplishing what you want to accomplish.

RIP Weezy

When I close my eyes I see my
Dead brother RIP Weezy
I loved him very much he was my oldest
Brother, my daddy's first born
The day brother died my heart
Was torn if I could take
My brother's place I would
If I could die instead of you I would
Sometimes I have daydreams I was him
But I could never be what
He was. Much love
RIP Weezy

-I Love Weezy, Alameda

From The Beat: You can be more than he had the chance to become, because you are still here, and you have your future ahead of you. So make him proud. Peace.

My . . . Me!

The beat is good
The hood is great
You try to do good
But people just hate
You're in a cell you can call it a box
I got the good life I'm not doing rocks
I'm doing good I'm doing the best
I'm not trying to fail I'm not like the rest
I'm going to stand out just like my mother
I'm not trying to end up just like my brother
Shot him in the back pierced his heart
Got him on target something like a dart
It made me mad I failed the test
Out the 15th that's one less
The family said they can't believe it's true
I can't tell you his name but we can call him Mr. Boo
He was posted on the block in a black T
When he died he got cremated to me
Stay having dough I'm not tryin' to get you hyped
That is a true story and that is my life!!

-Lil' Boo

From The Beat: Yeah The Beat is good and here to listen to your story and try to give you the best advice possible. This is a great piece as you're not afraid to express your emotions. We're glad to hear you do good and try your best. We hope that when you get out you stay focused and don't lost site of your goals.

How I Love My Bra

The one that care about me the most I would have to say my Big Bra. His name is BooMan. Why I say that is because he takes care of me and loves me the way no one can ever do.

I would do something and he would say "you sure that the right thing to do?" and that's what keep me out of trouble all the time. Right before I went to jail, he said "don't hang out with them you know how they get down."

But I still went to hang out with them and now I'm in jail. I was talking to my bra the other day. He was like "They gon' drop yo' case on Friday lil' Bra, keep yo' head up don't stress yo' self out. Me and mama are alright, and I'll go by and see her."

And I said ok. Then he said "when you down, I'm down, so keep yo head up. I love you, bra, I'm gone see you soon."

And I got off the phone. I went to my room and cried. That's my ride or die till the end: My big Bra. BooMan, my head is up for you.

-Lil' Fred, Alameda

From The Beat: The power of this piece - and the love you and your brother feel for each other - just blows us away. Use that power to give yourself strength when you start to feel low. You are loved!

Let it go! Mom! Please!

My mom is an alcoholic and she has diabetes, and she's very addicted to it. I love my mom clearly, but I see death. I watch for so many years my mother's drinking habit went from bad to worse.

It hurts me so bad, I want to reach out and say "what are you doing, please stop." But it's her life and she's grown. That's what she always tells me. So I distanced myself from her. But I pray that God don't take her away.

-Jasmine, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mother is suffering from two diseases - diabetes and alcoholism (even though a lot of people don't realize that alcoholism is a disease). When you get out, go to this site: www.al-anon.alateen.org. They may be able to help you. Peace.

Growing Up In Oakland

Growing up in Oakland is hard for a young black man, because of all the violence we see every day. It makes us want to get out there and do everything that the other people do.

Like where I live, I see all these people out there selling drugs and stuff and riding in those cars with the rims and loud music. And so we look at it, like damn that's the life we want to live. So what we do is go get a gun go and go rob a couple of people, then go to the block and go cop a zip or something then sell that, then reflip and keep doing that till we get up there...and then we buy a car or something and keep selling.

Then we got all these people out there that tell us not to do this and that but we don't pay attention. So when we go to jail we saying when we get out we are going to be a different person, but then when God do let us out, we go back to doing the same thing. Like for example, my brother Junior, he kept going the same thing over and over now look at him... doing four years in Soledad Prison, wishing that he never did what we did.

So that's all that I got to say beat, peace out.

-Charles, Alameda

From The Beat: You may be young, but you write and speak with the wisdom of someone a lot older. Maybe it's because of everything you've seen. Maybe this time away from the block can help you take control of your life. There are tons of positive groups you could join where you would meet people who would not only tell you to change, but also SHOW you how to change. It is possible, and you deserve it.

With Eyes Closed

Living with your eyes closed ...

How can you live better, yet how can you breathe...

In life with no see.

How can you beef when courage is underneath?

Life is too short for us not to see

Life is courage, don't take that from me.

Sight is amazing; darkness is too crazy

Moving and walking with no direction

How can darkness feel like heaven?

Life is like speed, but not a drug we eat

Everybody enjoys their weed

But in the end, who supports our needs?

In this world today everyone is in dream...

-Brittany, San Francisco

From The Beat: This poem is both tight and clean/ Reminds us of one by Poe who asked, "Is all that we see or seem, but a dream within a dream?" We hope you're not asleep because there's a lot at stake/ Which means you have to shake yourself wide awake.

From YGC To Being Free

Back and forth from my house to my second home known as the halls.

The system's playing games with me every time I fall, but I must stand tall.

From YGC to being free. All eyes on me,

But the odds are against me because my mentality.

Keeping it strong, 'cause my life is reality.

Waiting for my court date, stay calm is what god's telling me.

Yeah, this is life, but I think that its killing me.

-Silent Mongo, San Francisco

From The Beat: In a way, life is killing all of us, SM, because we all face the same fate at the end. But it's how we get there that counts. If you keep coming back and forth to the halls, we wonder how much the system is playing you and how much you are playing yourself. If you didn't know what you were doing that led to this time behind walls, then we'd have to agree that you're being played. But we're pretty sure you DO know what leads you here, which means you know what you have to stop doing to stop coming here. If you won't stop, then who's playing whom?

Tired of Crying

The last time I shed tears

From my eyes

Was being locked up between these walls

Feeling like

I'm about to lose my mind

Tired of crying

Thinking about the stupid mistake

I made

How it affects me

Being behind the walls and bars

That was my mistake though

Now I know

How to let stuff go

If I have my temper

On the outs

I'm gonna take a walk

By myself

While the wind blows

But now

I'm getting out tomorrow

And I will be successful

In whatever

I decide to do

So to all y'all Beat readers

Keep y' head up

Till it is time for you

To walk out the door

Peace out.

-Karmeisha, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you keep every word you wrote here close to your heart, so that when times get rough out there, you can remember the hopes of your truest self. Thank you for sharing this with The Beat.

The Pains Of Life

For a long time I have been struggling with a progressive disease called addiction.

For a long time I have been in denial about being an addict.

During the course of my disease I have hurt many people, including my own family.

I am very ashamed of the lying, stealing, and actions I have done.

During this time in the hall I am getting honest with myself and trying something new.

I am starting a new life, a life of recovery.

When I get out I am going to work the 12 steps with my sponsor,

and start making amends to the people I have hurt.

Things are looking up, but I know my progress is far more God's than my own.

-Rooney, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How wonderful to read a piece like this. The best to you, R, the best. Next piece share with us your plan!

Opened Eyes

I think it's hard with your eyes open,

Why? People expect you to live up to your devotion,

You are what they say but you're not,

What's to do but get caught up,

What's to do but give up, that's what they expect,

That's what they want,

So your eyes are open, now what?

Push yourself no buts, because your eyes are open that's it,

That's all you need, this is it.

-Mariha, Alameda

From The Beat: Deep poetry here, Mariha. Because yes, once your eyes are open to the reality of your life, there are no excuses anymore, you have to start following your vision with action!!!

I Am

I am a writer of my pain.

I am a person living of shame.

I am your daughter hiding my depression.

I am your sister making a good impression.

I am your friend acting like I'm fine.

I am a wisher wishing this life weren't mine.

I am a girl who thinks of suicide. I am a teenager pushing her tears aside.

I am a student who doesn't have a clue.

I am the girl sitting next to you.

I am the one asking you to care.

I am your best friend hoping you'll be there.

-Q, Alameda

From The Beat: What a powerful poem! You write it up in a way that makes us feel like we all secretly aren't alone, we are secretly a part of the whole human family. Keep writing!

No Respect

Well it's me from East Palo Alto still at this bootsy camp. Anyways, sometimes when this staff write you up you just don't give a shhh and you just do whatever you want, get kicked out of class, talk bad to staff, hella stuff.

But I still got like some months to go so I can be on the outs doing my thing.

-Chubbs

From The Beat: What is "your thing" going to be when you get out? Because the important part is to make sure it's not the same "thing" that got you locked up in the first place.

One-Hundred-Percent

My mom believes in me 100%. She's always by my side. When I'm locked up she comes to visit, she never misses any of my visits. Even though she sees me from a glass, I can always depend on her through thick and thin. All I could do is show her I understand and lift her head up.

My littler brother is waiting for me. Both of us are locked up. I'm in Alameda County; He's in Nevada. He has a few months to go, I have one month to do. I'll see you on the other side.

-Michael

From The Beat: Your mom really loves you - unlike a lot of people in here, you are not alone out there in the world. But still, if you want to do well in life, it's still you who is going to have to change. Are you ready to do that, knowing someone has that 100 percent faith in you?

Camp Life

Camp life is boring, you can't do what you want to do, you can't go to the store and get a bottle like you would do when you on the outs.

You can't dress in your clothes, you take a shower with hella ninjas, you can't even use the bathroom by yourself. I'm tired of this life. Still so, when I get out I'ma be cool and do what I do.

See I'm 18 already so I got to be cool or else I'ma be at Santa Rita. I'm still gone kick it with the homies and kick it at the block. No being 18 won't change me. But yeah, I'm going to get a job as soon as possible. I'm going to try and get a job in doing tattoos.

-Bones

From The Beat: Doing tattoos could be a great job - do you also draw and take art classes? Whatever happens, really ask yourself what it's getting you when you kick it on the block. Because like you say, 18 is a whole different ballgame.

About Camp

Well I'm going to start it off like this OK. At camp it's not that bad... it's kind of easy that is, if you make it easy. If you get into it with staff, then you're just putting the program down the drain. Some staff up here at camp try to help a lot of people by talking to them, givin' them phone calls, giving them food and letting them work so they won't get in trouble.

Another thing about camp is that it's a lot of kids up here that play a lot and like to get people in trouble. If you fight somebody up here you will go to the hall because I did before. Some kids up here like to snitch on some other kids and snitching is not in me OK. A lot of kids up here like to do so much stuff to fit in and it's a lot of fake ninjas up here and I don't like fake ninjas. Everybody I mess with is a hundred percent solid well I got to go.

-Lil' Rell

From The Beat: How is camp similar to the outs? Do you feel like the things you learned about staying out of trouble here can help you once you get out too?

Two Futures

In one future all I see
Is all of what my life always wanted to be
Making money hustling
Without no job to be busting
Making every effort to stack without trusting
Nobody for nothing
But the dreams be muffling
My thoughts from the other future of cops
Raiding my spot
Getting caught up with pot, bottle tops and crack rocks
Going to the judge in cuffs
Lies of not getting caught were bluffs
And fighting back with every breath that I must
Sitting back and not giving a shhh
But it sucks 'cause both futures that I saw
Because real and now I'm a ward of the law

-Kyle "Meeklo"

From The Beat: There's also a third option, the one where you dream as big as you can, about what you want. Do you want to travel around the world? Coach sports? Be at the hospital on the day your future son is born go to his games? Buy a house? Walk a stage to collect a college diploma? Because your life is only as big as you believe it can be.

Who's Waiting For Me?

The person that's waiting for me on the outs the mot is my family and also my girlfriend. She writes me all the time and tells me what's going on out on the block and she tells me my producer comes by looking for me. She stays in Marin City but we call it the Judge. Anyway that's who's waiting for me on the outs other than my dance group.

-Manie

From The Beat: Do you think that with the help of your girl, and your dance group, you'll be able to get your life straightened out? Because you've got all this talent, and big dreams. So chase them!

No Issues, Just Caught Up

What's up with it Beat?

It's up boy Young B from Camp Sweeney. I been in here six months already. I got two more months. I just gotta finish this drug program and then I'm good.

No, I don't feel like I have issue with drugs. I just got caught up with dealing drugs, so they gave me a program to do. I'm 'bout to get through it though so I can get back to the streets and do my thang.

-Insane Viet

From The Beat: For some people, the drug they are addicted to is the whole lifestyle of being out there in the streets. Are you in that position, or will you be able to leave everything behind

Prove Them Wrong

Everyday I wake up to people constantly telling me that I'm never going to be successful. Continuously it seems like someone's always behind me to harass me, like if an invisible person just kept pushing me down with insults.

I only have one person that really encourages me, that makes me feel like I can never quit, 'cause if I do that means every time someone told me I would be unsuccessful, that I gave in and that I gave them what they wanted. I'm going to prove them wrong.

-Ab

From The Beat: The strength you have shows through in this. Because it shows that no matter how many negative voices you may hear, there will always be one stronger: Your own.

Snitchin'

Young ninjas runnin' wild in these streets 'cause they lame
getting checked by thoroughbreds
'cause they OG's ain't taught them the rules to the game.
The number #1 rule is when you get caught
don't eva' mention no body name .

Everywhere I go the OG's is saying the same thing
they say "y'all generation snitchin' so much it's a shame."

But I'm doing it moving from these snitches
'cause we ain't built the same.

I don't do it 'cause I think it's cool
it's what's built in my veins.

Until everybody stop snitchin'
this game will never be the same.

-Grey

From The Beat: Snitchin' has been around since the cave man days. It ain't nothing new. From generation to generation there has been snitches. It is not necessarily one typical generation. But that's beside the point. You should avoid being caught up in the street game, because nobody ever wins. Take a look at how many people are in jail compared to how many people are successful by playing the street game.

Moving Bricks

Moving bricks is when you can be smooth.

Some young men move bricks 'cause they have no food.
Some men or women get caught 'cause they made the wrong move.

But you know what I ain't no fool.

I rather get an education and go to school

Get one of them big ass three story houses with a Jacuzzi
and a pool.

But I ain't gon' lie

Sometimes I break the rules and follow these fools.

Move one brick, maybe two

But hey it's my life I'm gon' do what I do

'Cause I choose...I get drunk and act a plum ass fool

Did a little dance cause the song made me want to move

Now I'm in this place mad cause of every move

Now I'm in this place mad cause everything I got to lose.

-Lil' T The Freestyle King

From The Beat: We know what kind of bricks you mean, but the image that comes to our mind is of a wonderful young man who is picking up one concrete brick at time to build a prison around himself, brick by brick. He's in up to his waist, and our question is: When will he start tearing down the prison?

Who Believes In Me

I have a couple people in my life that still think I can change. These people are my parents, this female Torie and my brother in law. They all think that I can still change my life. This hurts me because I haven't told them that I don't see myself changing because this is my mind set and where my head is at.

So it hurts me knowing that very time I speak to the only people who care about me I'm lying to them about who I am to make them happy. I know that they believe in me because every time we talk it's about them wanting to change me. This life is hard to break but I think I can make it to Felix Mitchell's level. These are the people who believe in me.

-Casper

From The Beat: We believe in you too! You don't have to take the route that you think you have to take. Everyone believes in you for a reason, and that's because they see that you are a very smart and talented individual. Sometimes people you love hold that vision for you until you can get there too. Don't let that go to waste. Believe in yourself 'cause we all do!

What We See Depend On What We Looking For

What we see depend on what we looked for. So how is living with your eyes closed good? 'Cause you got to see because what we see depend on mainly on what we like.

'Cause you might be up with an ugly chick or sleeping with rats and roaches in a dirty house. So I say you need your eyes closed because what we see depend on mainly what we looking for; 'Cause we might still be looking for something or someone in life.

-J.P. Baby

From The Beat: You might be right about your saying, but what exactly are you looking for? You always have to have your eyes open and ears open especially when you're trying to strive for a better life. Whatever anyone is looking for we have to see. And seeing the truth behind what we really want you definitely want to look with both eyes and with your heart open.

Life In Juvenile Hall

My "life" in juvenile hall is not that bad. When you gonna get out in a couple of days that ain't shhh. When I go up in my room my mind just starts thinking about my whole family and what's going on. I got a lot of my homies that are locked up, a couple in the hall, a lot in Santa Rita and at least two or more in prison. I guess that's the way the game goes.

It ain't cool to be here. You have to listen to staff all the time. They tell you when to eat and when to take showers. I want to say what's up to my homey. We will be out soon. The system can't keep us here forever. Just pimp that program! That's all I got to say! Aite then beat!

-Dodge

From The Beat: Life in juvenile ain't that bad compared to County Jail, or may be the State Pen. You're right the system can't keep you there forever. But you can keep yourself there forever. Because the system doesn't put you there, you put yourself behind those bars. And if you're honestly going around thinking you can go through life pimping everything than you're very wrong! Think about your family! It's worth it to do some things for yourself.

It's Easier With Eyes Closed

To me life is easier with eyes closed. The reason this is, is because in the life I live you can't prepare to see the things you see--like people shot in the face when your standing right behind them, or selling drugs that makes people destroy themselves so you can live well, to people who care for you or not wanting anything to do with you.

We're so quick to hurt someone so you can live when you're on someone else's block. I see people that are 70 years old who come to me for product and have lost their kids to this substance. This why life is easier with eyes closed.

-Jasper

From The Beat: Life ain't easy period! We're all gonna see things that we'd rather not have witnessed. But you can't go through life walking blind. Being able to see is a privilege. And if your conscience is so heavy about the things you're doing that you'd rather live life with your eyes closed, then maybe you need to open them and start searching for better solutions.

I Need To Stop

I need to stop being bad because I want everybody to see me do good at school and get my High School Diploma. That way I can get a job, so what ever I need I can just buy it instead of stealing it. I need to stop coming to jail. The food is not good and it taste like cardboard.

-Blue

From The Beat: Yeah you said it best yourself. You need to stop not believing in yourself. You know you can achieve your goals if you really wanted to. Don't let small things side track you from accomplishing those big goals that you have.

The Best Hug...from my ex

The best hug I had was from my ex. I didn't know she was going to hug me it was almost eight months after we broke up. I didn't expect her to see me again.

She said she was "movin' to Antioch" in February '06, but she told me she was visiting her Grand Mom. I was so happy we just spend hours talking and catching up on the times that we had at school.

-Ryan

From The Beat: What was so special about the hug that she gave you. Was it real affectionate? How did it make you feel?

Yo' Courage

Yo' this young flame. Yo' how somebody posta' believe in you when you don't even believe in yourself. It all start from believing in yourself and of course your parents gone believe in you no matter what you do.

That is what my moms told me. To all my young homies don't listen to suck ninjas who wanna bring you down. Keep ya' head up above that water line 'cause I am. I don't wanna drown. That's why I believe in myself.

-Young Flame

From The Beat: You're right you definitely have to believe in yourself. It's also good when people believe in you because it motivates you to do good. That's great advice you're giving to your homies. What, exactly is that "water line?"

Meeting The Juvenile Hall System

Meeting the Juvenile Hall system was not a wonderful thing, especially when you first get settled in to listening to staff. The staff in here is respectful but being locked down and looking at walls is not me.

Couple of days when I got settled I read the Tookie Williams book. And being in jail period is not the way to go. Being locked down seeing daylight maybe for an hour. The rights in here are unbelievable. If you don't come out for large muscle exercise you stay in your room at night for an hour when the rest of the Group come out and watch TV.

The Tookie Williams Book that I read taught me that if I don't do stupid things then I won't come back to jail/Juvenile Hall.

-Eddie

From The Beat: It shouldn't be for anyone to be locked down looking at walls all day. We're glad to hear you talk about staff being respectful and that you have rights. You should use this time to think about life and what you want to do. You're not gonna be in there forever. You will soon be out and you're gonna need a plan so you won't find yourself staring at those walls again! Good luck!

She Believes In Me

My mom believes in me. The reason how I know she believes in me is because of the ways she talks to me and she always tells me that everything is gonna be all right, as of in the position that I'm in right now.

No matter how much she hates what I did to get me in this place she's always there for me. She tells me that Jesus is going to help us and to not worry. Everything is going to be fine. And I also believe in myself and in a better future 'cause I know that being locked up just ain't for me. And I believe that I deserve a better future.

-Luis

From The Beat: You got the right mind state already. We believe in you also. You can do whatever you want to do. Just stay out of trouble. Set your goals high and it's up to you to strive for your own better future. We believe!

My Dad's Third Strike

Damn just found out ma daddy uncle and cousin looking at 25 to life for some other shhh. Damn its my dad's 3rd strike so he can kiss freedom goodbye. Tears in my eyes but it be like that some times ma cousin Miko is 'bout to do five years in the pen!

Free my dad he a man of business, if you know what I mean he a shot caller. The question is am I going to take over ...damn to be continued

-Clay Dizzle The Main Target

From The Beat: Like we said in the unit, your question is not about taking over his business. Instead it's about taking over your future, being the first person in the family to take all those street smart and turn them into skills you can use to work legit, and break free, and make yourself and your children proud. Peace.

The Last Hug

The visiting room here at Alameda county Juvi is where my mom gave me my last hug. I mean I have love for her but I was always out and about when I wasn't locked up.

It's not like I spent more than an hour a week with her anyway so really it's no different. By the way you shouldn't cut people's pieces just cause the piece isn't "positive" in your eyes. Truth must be heard.

-Ozzy

From The Beat: We need to edit people's pieces if they use too much cussing, threaten someone, or flat out disrespect somebody. We also edit people's pieces if they glorify the game—we don't want The Beat to support the cycle that has people in and out, and dying. You have the freedom to write what you mean, your truth, and you must find a way to do it that is appropriate. There's a lot of good writing here that tells the truth, which isn't all positive, and is still appropriate. The system gives us space to let you express yourself, with respect.

R.I.P Carl

What's up with The Beat Within. I just wanted to ask a question? When two of my friends hit a lick together and one let Carl uses his thang. And Carl said you aint getting it back. And as soon as he turn his head he shot Carl in the head. Now tell me. Was that scandalous or was it ever friendship?

-Baby Goon

From The Beat: That was never a friendship if you ask us. It's scandalous enough that they were already "hitting a lick" and even more scandalous that you're supposed friend shoots you with your back turned. You can't trust anyone nowadays especially if you're into doing negative activities. The people you can trust are gonna be the ones doing positive things.

I Need A Girl

I need a girl I could call my boo

When I say I love you

She say I love you too

When we began she said man I gotta take it slow

There's a lot of hating that's just how it goes

Seen this girl she be droppin' bombs

Took me to her house just to meet her dad and every time

I got a question they just walk on by

And when I looked back at her she just caught my eye

But I guess I wasn't good, I didn't skate

People say I acted fake

But they like to hate

And the ones that do hate yeah they way too late. Y'all on the first piece

I already ate the cake

-Tonio

From The Beat: We were all blown away listening to you sing this song in the unit. You are a born musician and a born artist, but now comes the hard part... getting out and staying out so you can keep singing.

Hard To Live With Your Eyes Open

I've never heard the song but I think it means something like living in a dream. While my eyes are closed I'm living large and peacefully. But when my eyes are open I only see negative I see my life turn sour and can't turn it around.

With my eyes closed, I never been to this place. I'm at home with the people who love me and my daughter. So it's hard living with my eyes open, 'cause I see and I'm facing the real world.

When I close my eyes I can see and do or be anything I want and can't nobody stop that. But as long as my eyes are open the more things I learn about everyday life.

It's not easy but I have to keep pushing to turn my life around so I can live the way I do when my eyes are closed.

-Lewis

From The Beat: You're right, the hard realities, of jail, of being broke, of street stress, are enough to make anyone want to turn away. But you need your eyes wide open in order to get through it, and, hopefully, get out of it one day.

I Believe In Me

I really don't care who believe in me because I believe in me. I have faith in myself. On the real. What the next person gotta say anyway?

-Unknown

From The Beat: Absolutely, it always has to start with you, right? So what do you believe about yourself, your future, your potential, your intelligence? Tell us!

Goodbye and Thanks

The last person I gave a hug to was to my mom and my grandma. It was during visiting at the juvenile hall I'm at right now. It was a hug of goodbye and thanks for coming to see me.

I felt sad when I gave my mom and grandma a hug because I wanted to leave with them and not to give them a hug and I stay here in juvenile hall. I think my mom's and grandma's feelings was sad because I don't think they would want for me to be here because they care too much for me and wouldn't want me to stay or be here.

-Tony

From The Beat: You're absolutely right about that. Nobody wants to see you there, at least anybody that actually cares about you. We don't want to see you there. You should be at home with your mom and grandma. You will get out, so when you do don't take your freedom for granted.

The Day I Almost Lost My Life

It was close to the end of the year 2005 and I was bad. I was about thirteen years old and I had got into a fight with a kid that tried to punk my lil' Cousin Cedric to go home. We was on 98th and C street and I was coming from Elmhurst playing football with my potnas and it was a park over there. I stopped at the park and fought the kid who tried to punk my cousin.

At first, I was getting beat up then I started winning. I took the kid's bike and threw it at him and ran. He went and got his older brothers I was by McDonalds on 98th and East 14th street. His brothers came out of a black car and started shooting at me. A bullet grazed my head. And till this day I should have been dead.

-Lil' Jon Jon

From The Beat: That's a crazy story! Nowadays is nothing like the old days when kids use to actually square up and box. Now everybody resorts to guns. Just be careful. Mind your own business next time 'cause you never know who you might be messing with.

Finally Open My Eyes

I wish I could close my eyes and sleep for days. Maybe it won't hurt so bad, maybe the pain will go away. The struggles the hurt remembering my past To be free again make happiness last To always need and want to escape. To make a change is never too late. So when I open my eyes I'm finally awake Won't think for tomorrow just live for today.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: What are the biggest changes you'd have to make/so you could cut yourself a break/from all the suffering and sorrow/so you can build your brighter tomorrow?

Every Night I Wonder

The best hug I ever gave was to my mom and little sister and that was ten months ago because I started living by my own for like four months 'cause my dad had kicked me out. When I hug my mom she started cryin' and my little sister did too.

Then I went to jail for six months and the only time I got to see my newborn sister was behind a glass window. Then I got released to a group home. I was out for two weeks before I went back to jail.

I still haven't seen my family since I was out. And now I still won't even see my mom and sisters for a long time 'cause I'm gonna be locked up for another long time. And every night I wonder do my mom or sister ever think about me.

-Lil' Charlie a.k.a. Lil' Syrup Bo

From The Beat: We're sure that your family thinks about you. They wouldn't be over there trying to visit you. Of course they miss you a lot. But you need to start thinking more of them too. Think about them before you do something that's gonna jeopardize your freedom next time. You're being selfish by having your freedom and then taking it for granted by going right back to jail.

Still There With Me

My mom gave me the last hug. The occasion was sad because I didn't want her to go from me. The hug was because she was leaving.

I cried after she left in my room cell. Me seeing her and I didn't want to let her go. She seems sad. It reminds me that she is still there with me.

-Edwin

From The Beat: It is sad being away from your loved ones especially your mother. We can only imagine she's feeling very sad, missing you. Don't waste your time coming here when you have a mother that cares and loves you at home.

I Have to Love Me

Everybody I ever know or ever been close to has turned their back on me and stabbed me in mind. Yeah I am the one who believes in forgiveness and moves on, but I learned that when people see that in me they take it for granted, and make me feel low about myself like I'm not important.

But somebody once told me recently that I have to love me. Love what I can do for myself. Love what I stand for. Love what I am. I'm not gonna let myself be compared to some ground beef you buy in Safeway. I need to start loving myself.

-Lady Floss

From The Beat: It's good to hear you writing like this, because yes, it's one of the most powerful skills you can learn, to treat yourself with straight up loving kindness. And anyone you know who doesn't treat you that way doesn't deserve your precious time!

Twenty Four More Days

Man...wassup beat? To start off, I know I always write about getting out but, that's because all I think about is the day I get out.

One of my potnas jus got in here and he told me hella of my potnas in the out getting hella bad luck so, when I get out I'ma be cool. So that bad luck won't come near me.

-Lil' H.S.

From The Beat: We're sorry to break the news to you man, but that's not how luck works. Just because other people are getting busted doesn't mean that you won't. If you get out and act so sure that you can do whatever you want and not get caught, that cockiness will catch up to you real fast, believe us. If you get out and be cool by not getting into trouble, that bad luck will probably blow right past you.

Maximum Security Blues

Sittin' in my room up in maximum security
Getting BS lines from ninjas sayin' they feeling me.
But how can they?

They don't know what I'm going through
Got me up in this hall eatin' this nasty food.
The judge and the DA don't care about me or you
And these no contact visits hurts your parents more then it do you.

Got us sittin' locked up in these cells all day.
You gotta sit back and ask people if you may,
If you may get a book,
If you may call your lawyer
That's how it is for us in maximum security in California.

-Lil' Stace

From The Beat: A famous musician once said "The blues ain't nothin' but a good man feelin' bad"... and that's what this poem is. For a second, while we read this, we can feel what you're going through, and we can also feel how you are a good person who loves his family and wants things to be better!

Positive Things

My mom and my whole family is in my corner because they always tell me positive things and want the best for me. It Always helps me to be the best in life.

And yes I believe in myself because I take all the good and positive things they tell me for granted because I know it would help me in life and it would be helpful for me.

-Tony

From The Beat: Well it's time for you to stop taking those things for granted. You need to start believing in yourself and start making changes so you can stop coming to jail.

Open Heart

You make my sunrise in so many mornings
You make my star shine at night
If I built a sand castle would you be my queen
I'm for real
You made my heart complete
You sweeter than caramel, please Mr. Caramel
I need two scoops. I need you to cover me with your love.
The more I get the more I want. I'm addicted to you.
You the sweetest drug, I'm so high off you.

-Mic

From The Beat: Your poem really gives a strong sense of the emotions you're going through, the reader can almost feel it too. While feelings of affection can be great, they can also be completely and totally consuming, which is what makes love a lot trickier. Thanks for writing, and we hope to read more from you!

The Last Hug I Got

The last hug I got was when I got my first visit.

The person I hugged was my mother, and I miss her so much. The occasion was both because I was happy I saw her and hugged her, but I was sad that I was in jail and she couldn't get me out.

It was an "I love you" hug. It was tears and smiles because I was happy she came to see me, and tears because I was in jail. I felt nothing but love and happiness. I was thinking that she really love me to come see me and give me a hug, but was sad that she couldn't leave home with me. I can remember happiness and love and a great time after it.

My mom believes in me the most. She believes in me the most because I was the baby before she had my little brother. She believes I can do anything if I put my mind to it. She believes in me because she loves me, and I can tell her anything about me. She believes in me because she has seen what I can do and she will never give up on me because she loves me.

-Hamp

From The Beat: You have a loving and caring mother. She must be a strong woman. What has she taught you about life, about yourself, about what it takes to be successful.

Ain't My Thing

What's up Beat! This is yo' boy Lil' Man from Oakland. This is all about going to the hood, boy. Man, I love the hood. That's all I know. But I miss my big bras Gusto and Dady.

But really I miss my mother more. She passed away. But I gotta stay strong for her, do good things, like going to school. But that ain't my type of thing.

My thing is to sell drugs or take pills. It makes me feel good bra, really good, man forget school I'm too hood. Forget this fake ass ninjas in here.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Reading this was like watching a man battle himself on paper. One side feels the love and loss of his mother and wants to succeed for her, and then the other side is trying to bury that pain in street living. Is it stressful dealing with these two sides that pull you in opposite directions?

To Do Better

The last person who gave me hug, was my mom and dad when they came and visited me. My parents hugged me. All they were thinking of is them wanting me to do better.

-Cory

From The Beat: We all want you to do better Cory. We want you to not only do better, but also be more positive about things. You don't like the place you're at because it was built for you not to like it. Stop doing what you were doing that got you here in the first place.

Overdue Apology

I feel that the house of representatives should've apologized long ago for the injustice and maltreatment of African-Americans. I think it is a good thing to apologize, but the apology is too late.

I believe that no one should be treated in such an inferior way because of the color of their skin. We all are human beings and should have equal rights. It isn't fresh to apologize 200 years later after the abolishment.

-Another human

From The Beat: You're right that it's late, but on the other hand, we have to believe that it's never too late to change. Not for a country, not for an individual. Because that belief is where we find hope!

A Baseball Career

Baseball is a sport that takes an awful lot to do well in. Baseball players are some of the strongest people in the sports world. I want to play a few games of baseball with the PO's.

I like to do baseball exercises. I want to play baseball for a college team like Stanford or maybe for Howard. I like to throw things. I have very good accuracy.

-Konata

From The Beat: You're right it takes a great athlete to be a good baseball player. If you want a career in baseball you have to be determined and work hard. Not only do you have to stay in shape but you also have to do well in school. Go for it, you're the only one that can limit yourself to the things you can do.

Crank Makes You Mental

I think the worst drug is crank. The reason why is cause if you use it and take hecka diet pills, your body has a bad reaction. It causes you to go psycho. I think people that do crank are knocks and who ever does it is out of his mind.

Literally, why do a drug and keep on doin' it when it's not doin' nothin' but killing yourself and making you mental?

It's the drug that makes you crazy, have illusions and makes you hit your babies, screams at a child, a life that is wild. One pill four pills, then it's ten, What's to do but sin, I didn't know what to do but watch you do crank in the bathroom.

-Mariha

From The Beat: Wow, the images and descriptions here were intense and charged. You're right about meth, it's a terrifying drug, but we have sympathy for the people who get hooked on it. It's a very hard drug to quit, but some people manage. Do you know any ex-meth addicts?

Admiration Of Love

Your beauty I admire it's as vast as the ocean with you I feel invincible my love is like devotion
The feelings that I have for you is like a burning flame
With you it's always something new
It's like a learning game this life has been so happy it reminds me Of a dream but love is so much better
It's a never ending thing.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We hope this love is a strong healthy love that can help you and your girl make each other stronger.

My Two Rivers Make Me

One side of my river is an Asian side. That's the Korean side of me. The other side of the rivers is the black side. When you put them together, the rivers make me. I can say I'm a cool person to be with and be around when I know you.

But when I don't know you there might be problems. The reason I say this is I don't really know you I don't like you. I can't say why, but that's the way I am. My mom is the calm but crazy side ...she's the Korean side. My dad's the hard headed side that gets himself into a lot of trouble.

I can say I follow in both of my parents' genes and ways, because I followed my dad into getting into trouble, and now I have a child on the way and he was in this exact position.

-Two Rivers

From The Beat: This piece is great, but you forgot to sign your name to it. We figured you'd let us give you this nickname for now, but don't forget to come up with one of your own!

Adult Time No Joke

What can I say, I made it to the big league. I got a PFN. At age 17 I'm no longer known in the system as David. I'm now letters and numbers. When I get out of here this time I can no longer come here. If I violate my probation, I will do three years mandatory 'cause it's quarter of my max time, which is twelve years so for all of you out there that think this shhh is a joke, it ain't no joke, that's a long time behind bars. So stop messin' up and do good. OK, I'm out.

-Lil One

From The Beat: You will always be David aka Lil One to us, no matter what. But also - you have been given another chance, so take it, and don't violate! Good luck.

The Last Time I Cried, But Didn't Give Up

I cried silently yesterday
Because things wouldn't go my way
Being caged all alone in my room
Praying and hoping I get out soon
I cried to myself, then looked in the mirror
I won't give up, give in, I fear
I put my head up said yes I can do this
Bye bye to being sad, being happy is what I miss.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: "I put my head up and said 'yes, I can do this' - what a great line, and what a great way to remind yourself of who you are! Congratulations.

She Cool

I don't think no one believe in me not the judge not the police but I do got one person in mind. Her name is Ms. Vaughn, she work in the hall.

She cool see, most people that work here say "I see you in a week when you come back" I be like heck wit you ninja! but Ms. Vaughn never say no shhh like that.

-Ham-bone

From The Beat: We're happy you've found someone who is a positive influence for you, especially someone who is with you in the hall. Next time we'd like to see more writing from you though - what is it about Ms. Vaughn that's so helpful for you other than her not putting you down?

My Future

When I get out I'm gonna go back to school and maybe go on to college. When I turn 21 I'm gonna try to work as a staff at juvenile hall.

-P

From The Beat: Juvenile Hall needs staff who have been through what the youth are going through, who can understand them. But before you try to save the youth, you have to save yourself? What are you doing to make that happen?

I Try to Change

No one believes in me. I try to change & tell everybody that I am but they won't believe me. I should've changed the first time I said it, but now it's too late.

My parents won't answer my calls they didn't come to my court day they won't even write back to me. It's all over with I might as well cut.

-LC

From The Beat: Sometimes people lose faith that change is possible, but it's always possible. You may have to prove it's possible through action instead of words if you've said it too many times without changing, but you still can prove yourself to your parents, the world, even you. We want you to know that we believe you have the ability to change. It's NEVER too late.

Last Hug Was My PO

The last hug I had was when I was on the outs and my PO came to the house. We had a cool talk with her we had a good time together.

-Tonio

From The Beat: It's good you have a PO who you get along with. She is on your side, she wants to help you. Don't forget that!

With Eyes Closed

By living with your eyes closed I think they meant living without seeing anything and by that it makes it easier because you can have less expectations, but it can also be harder because you can't seem to enjoy some good qualities of life.

-Jacob

From The Beat: That's a very good way to put it. I mean if we weren't able to see then how would you gangbang colors or street corners? But on the flip side you wouldn't get to enjoy all the other things in life? What would you prefer?

Dreams

When I close my eyes
I dream
I'm at home
then I wake up
in this messed-up cell.

-Michael

From The Beat: It's good to dream you're at home, if you can also dream of how you want to live when you get back home. That way you can avoid more time in the cell!

Eyes Closed

Well since I been here I think that doing stupid things on the street is just going to make me come back here. And that's not what I want. The only thing that's good about coming here is now I can get clean from my PO.

-Cory

From The Beat: You should take this time to reflect on what you want to do in life. You say you don't want to come back. Stop doing things that's gone make you come back. What can you do on the flip side so you're not doing stupid things on the street?

Meth is the Worst Drug

The worst drug is meth cause my mom used to smoke meth, and she was always high, and she never watched me and my brothers. She just got high all day.
She stopped 'cause she was killing herself.

-Lil' Boogie

From The Beat: Wow, you have lived through some difficult times - you've learned the hard way about how deadly meth can be. At the same time, your mother seems to be fighting her addiction. Has your relationship with her improved since she quit using it? Is she in better shape?

The Person That Believes In Me

The person that believes in me is my dad. He's been there for me my whole life. When I start hanging with the wrong people and started getting in trouble he was there to back me up. He believe that I did not do what they say I did.

-Lil Maijji

From The Beat: That's hella cool that your dad has your back like that. You shouldn't take that for granted because a lot of people don't have dads or let alone parents. So believe in yourself like your dad does and stay away from the wrong crowd.

Who believes in "Me"?

Hey what's up peeps, the topic for the day is who believes in you. But instead I personally say, who believes in me? Well, I can start out by saying my parents have always been supportive of me. With the stupid decisions that I have made or the good life-changing ones: And my big sis, well I treat her like my lil' sis.

I have always tried to be protective over her, but in the end she always reminds me that she's older than I am. Because of that, she's had my back and supports me. She's my best buddy, she's always been there for me. When with the stupid stuff I do, her face says you idiot, but her eyes all she can do is love me no matter what decisions I make. To me she's the most beautiful person and friend I know.

She has gotten me through so much in this speed bump in my life.

-Toaster

From The Beat: This is a powerful testimony to the love of family. We are happy that your sister has been so supportive of you. What about your mom and dad? Are they helping out as well, as you go through this "speed bump,"

Who Believe In Me

The people who have always believed in me is my family. They have always had my back and told me I had a future. No matter what the situation was they had me, and family is supposed to do that and they have.

Like my dad for being my dad when my real dad wasn't there, he was there for me and still is. My mom for always supporting me in whatever I do, like when I played basketball she was at every game she could go to. Even if she was sick she was there.

Ever since I've been in here they have came to all the visit when some people's parent don't even come that's what made me realize that, it was being in here! That's why I know they believe in me.

-Lil Drew

From The Beat: We're glad you've come to appreciate the support and unconditional love of your family through being in the hall, seeing what others aren't so lucky to have. We hope you remember how they've been there once you're out, and strive to achieve what they know you can.

How I Feel

Nobody understands the pain that I feel, being locked up in a cell,
with the dirty smells, and it really kills.
So let me tell you how I feel, so broke down,
disintegrated
knowing that there ain't no hope now.
Struggle to get on my feet but I always fall down,
'cause it seems like something always in the way.
Barely got shhh to say, but pray, in my mind, that in time,
I'll be out one day.
Back with the fam, with the brothers tryna get paid,
it's a struggle out there but we do it anyway.
Free me and my loved ones fast, that's all I gotta say.
Looking forward to that day, when I get to walk out from that front gate,
with a mean mug on my face until my loved ones get release,
and that's when again I could start living my life in peace.

-S.

From The Beat: You've got some good rhymes, good flows going on here. You're writing makes us wonder what you think is stopping you - what's always in the way? Maybe if you can figure out what that is, they you can turn it around and land on your feet next time.

When I Get Out I'm Gon' Be There

When I get out I'm going to be there for my family, especially for my little brother. I neglected him, all he wanted to do was be like me.

I'm in here now and not settin a good example. When I get out he gon' be with me 24/7. I'm going to be the best brother in the world to him, that's how I want him to remember me from the time I get out.

It's gon' be me and him till the world end.

-Rayshannan

From The Beat: You've got a lot of conviction in your statements, and we hope you stick to them. Being an example for your brother is so important for his growing up, and we know you can be that positive force in his life if you just turn it around when you get out.

My Mom Believes in Me

My mom always believes in me no matter what I do, because she is always there for me to help me if I'm in trouble or not.

-Jason

From The Beat: We hope that knowing she believes in you makes it easier to believe in yourself, too.

The Last Hug

What's up Beat. Well today, finally, I'm gonna write about your topics. Well I been in here for months, haven't had a hug from moms in four months. Damn that's hella long...

Well today my PO came to talk to me and told me hat I'ma get my special visit on Wednesday. So I'm finally going to get to hug her because to tell you the truth I'm tired of seeing her through that thick ass glass, trying to hug her but can't. I'm tired of being here in max unit.

Well the only person who believes in me is my Mom. She wants me to go to school she always tell me to finish school so I wont to have to work hard when I have my own family.

She always tells me how hard it has been for her to raise us. Even though I'm here, my mom still thinks that when I get out I can change around and get on track to a successful life. Well I love you mom with all my heart.

-Arabe

From The Beat: Your family believes in you, not just your mom. But do you believe in yourself? We hope you do - because its' going to take faith to get through your next placement. The Beat believes in you!

Nano

Hey what's up Beat, this is your boy Nano. Well I'm just waiting for my homepass. I'm tryin' to do my best so I could be with my girl mini and I miss my family and my ninjas.

To my ninjas keep your head up and keep makin' them dollars. When I get out, I'm gonna just kick it but it's bad I ain't doin' that hot stuff no more.

I'm 18 already and I want to have a baby so you feel me I want to get my shhh straight.

When I get my home pass, the first thing I'm gonna do is go get a haircut cause this staff don't want to hook me up, then I'ma go with my girl and take care of her 'cause she can't walk.

To my baby Mini don't give up ,keep your head up forget the haters, I'll be with you soon.

-Nano

From The Beat: The love you feel for your girl is real, and the story you told us about what you've been through together is the stuff of movies. You have a great life ahead of you, we hope to hear more about it.

This Unit Is Weak

What's up Beat. This unit is hella weak. Because when one person messes up we all get in trouble no matter what happen. When one person goes bad staff make it seem like we all went bad.

But that's how I feel about this unit.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: At least you're not the one who went bad. It shows that as time moves on you get more and more mature... that maturity will help you succeed on the outs.

Fake!

When I look around the room

I see nothing but fakes

Ninjas talking like they hard

But they soft like cakes

Showin off in the hall

Tryna make they name

But when they get out on the streets

They get hit by thangs

That's why I stay smart

And I use my brain

Keep my business on low

Unless I'm tryna get fame

Cause a ninja a snitch on

If they know yo game

So I keep my game straight like a one way train

Cause I ain't tryna fall back bra

I'm tryna maintain

Tryna get my money straight

So I can buy me new thang

So when you see me on the block

I probably got on a new chain

New jays on my feet, outfit looking clean

Cause I ain't playing in the streets

I'ma money machine

See my eye color brown

But they focused on green!

-NellyBo

From The Beat: Nice rap, good rhymes, it's fun for the reader which is always a good thing. You don't have to worry about whether others are fake or not, just be solid yourself. Their lives are up to them, and remember! The clothes don't make the man.

What I'm Going To Do When I Get Out

1. When I get out I plan on going back to school and finishing. I plan on going to college after I finish high school. I don't like being in this type of place because a lot of people up here play too much and like to get you in trouble, and like to keep you from going home to your family. It's a lot of people up at camp that help you and teach you what you can do and what you can't do.

2. When I get out I want to spend more time with my family and take care of them, because when you in here you don't get to see your family like you want to a lot of people's parents don't come see them or come get them so they can go home. That's why a lot of people run from this camp, because they can't take the pressure. Like me, I ran from this camp for my first time and I did it with my big brother that was up here with me. And now he's back in jail waiting to find out what's going to happen. Well I got to go... I can't wait to get out so I can be with my family again.

-Rell

From The Beat: We're sorry about your brother - but in a way, it's good to hear that this second time around, you feel like you are doing better at camp. It's like you got that second chance, and you're taking it seriously, like a young man with a plan!

No One Believes in Me

Nowadays when I'm in an' out of the hall my parents don't believe in me no more. The only thing they say is you just gon' go in and out like your brother.

Ever since I've been in this system my dad been snitchin to my PO and the judge, nothing but bad things. That's why I'm back in this thang again. I tried doing my best but all he do is talk shhh and snitch on me so heck with him. I'm tired of this thang and it feels like no one believe me so heck with all them.

-Stewie

From The Beat: We're sorry your dad doesn't believe in your ability to change if given the chance, it seems he's making it harder for you to succeed by not giving you chances. But it also sounds like he's trying to make sure you are given consequences for your actions. Maybe this is his way of helping you to change, and he believes the best way to get you to change is by coming to the hall. Sometimes people want you to get it before you turn 18 and go to the adult system.

A Few Words

I'm sorry mom for making you cry and go through all this pain. I'm sorry sister for making you suffer even though you don't know because you're too little, mija but I'm sorry I love you to death.

-G. Baby

From The Beat: What your little sister needs, and what your mom needs, is to know that you have better plans ahead of you. So tell us, what are they? Make the changes, for the love of your mom, your sister, yourself.

It Breaks My Heart for My Mom

The last hug I gave is to my mom, and yes it was a happy hug because my mom came to visit me in Juvenile Hall and I felt very good about it.

The hug my mom gave me was a hug of a loving and caring greeting. The hug was tears, smiles and frowning. The reason I say tears is because it was very sad that my mom has to come up here and see me in Juvenile Hall, and that's something a mom would never want to see is when they son/daughter in Juvenile Hall. And the other reason it is frowning is because it breaks my heart for my mom, coming up here seeing me like this. And it is a smile because I'm glad that I have someone that cares for me out on the other side of the cell wall.

I was feeling sad but happy because I want my mom to visit me, but it's very sad. My mom felt very sad and bad because my mom don't like seeing her son in Juvenile Hall.

-D.

From The Beat: You've got a lot of strong feelings swirling around you seeing your mom. It might have been hard for her to see you in the Hall, but she came to support you, to let you know she knows you are more than the behavior that got you here. She's known you for a long time...

Mistakes We Made

With my eyes closed I can see the world in a clear view. The things we do, we don't see how it exactly happen. But when we look back upon out past we see what mistakes we made and how it happen. Man this bullshhh, I tire of this shhh and I can't wait to be released. Man I got 2 month and 19 more days to go.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: You're totally right - it's a lot easier to see the past clearly than it is the present or future. But it's not impossible to see our present, just a little more difficult. I'm sure if you think a little harder, you can see your present, and maybe even your future, a little more clearly. Maybe it helps you to close your eyes from time to time, to meditate a bit on what's going on without distraction.

Faith in Me

My dad believes in me because he knows I'm gon' get some where in life, even though I'm in this Juvenile Hall.

I never planned on coming to this place, I played basketball once upon a time. But I dropped out of school fighting a lot, but I've changed. It was just a misunderstanding with this warrant I had 2 years ago and it just caught up wit me.

My dad tells me about a lot that I need to do, and that I am gon' do, an' what he's gonna make me do in my life. That's why I know my dad got faith in me.

Like he said he's gonna make me turn myself in to god when I get out of here, and I'm gonna do that just for him and myself and my life, and to help my mom and my kids and my girl and that's from the heart. I love my dad, my mom and my kids, and my beautiful girl.

-Lil J.

From The Beat: Sounds like you've got a great support system - not only your dad, but your mom, girl, and kids. They're all behind you, waiting for you to get back and stay back for them, and for yourself. We believe you can do what you need to do to be there for them like they're there for you now. You've got nothing to lose by making those changes but jail time!

Eyes Wide Open

Living life in this world with my eyes open
Experienced all the bad but for the good I keep hoping

I can't think right and my heart is cold as ice
Pray to God every night because I been through so much in my life

Build up with so much anger some I can't release
Sitting in jail clueless 'cause I wasn't thinking on the streets

Lost someone that means so much to me it got my mind tripping
Continue to hide my feelings because my family I'm really missing

For my mom I do good stay forward and stay strong
Going to YA in a couple of weeks and hoping it won't be long.

-Teddy

From The Beat: You weren't thinking before/but you are today/so you'll get through the heat at CYA/because you're taking with you your best weapon/that's the head on your shoulders and the pride in your steppin'

Doing Wut I Do

I don't even hear what people say to me. All I hear is what I feel can make me better or stronger.

I feel like I'm playing a sport all my life and I never seem to look in the crowd, or the stands should I say. So when people tell me negative things about myself, I tend to brush it off or not even notice. It makes people feel stupid about themselves hatin' on me.

I always seem to have a tough crowd wherever I go so I just zone out when I'm playing my sport doing wut I do. And the critics turn into fans.

-Brov

From The Beat: This is a great piece, you've got a really effective metaphor with the comparison to sports. You can't listen to all the negative things people have to say all the time, or else we'd all go crazy. The positives more often lead to change anyway. But not all criticism is negative - sometimes it can be constructive, more like advice. This type of criticism can make all the difference in someone's life.

The Last Hug

The last person I hugged was my aunt and uncle. It was a happy and sad moment because I was feeling sad because visiting time was over, but happy 'cause I got to see them. I was sad but there were no tears. There were smiles and laughter from me and my uncle. I was feeling good.

-PG

From The Beat: When you're on the outs, do you stay with your aunt and uncle? If they are loyal enough to support you when you're here, then we hope you're thinking about how you can "pay them back" by not doing the things that allow the system to lock you up!

The Beef

What it do with The Beat? It's ya boy Gully Bub holding it down for the 'jets, ya dig! But yeah, this beef shhh is getting ugly nowadays. I mean ninjas out here getting smacked left to right. I mean every time you turn around it's a funeral.

I mean ninjas be getting in the beef and don't even know how the shhh started in the first place. They just want to fit in. And ninjas be out there broke. How you gon beef with no money. You know you gotta stay with a cannon 'cause if a ninja catch you slippin', that's yo' ass. That's why I keep mine.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: Here's the thing about that "cannon" you keep. Everybody keeps one so they won't be caught slippin'. And now, since everyone is strapped, including young kids, gunfire is a regular part of life... and death. Something is very wrong with this picture!

Eyes Closed...

While my eyes are closed
I reminisce on the days that decomposed
A very long time ago
With the same fire disintegrating under my toes
I'm a stone with blistering bones
That has some tolerance in my tone
Do you understand that I'm alone
In that deep dark whole I own
So I just sing that same-ass song
That helps my strong woman come back to me as I own...

-Ms. Burger

From The Beat: We're not sure if your "strong woman" is someone else or yourself, but in either case, we also hope you find the support you need (from within you or without) to stop decomposing and start creating a new and brighter future! What are your plans to achieve that?

The Last Hug

The last person I gave a hug to was my boyfriend. It was a happy occasion because I was happy to see him. The hug was a hug of greeting and partying. There was smiles and laughter. I smiled because that's my boyfriend and I haven't seen him in a couple of months. And I laughed because it was a happy moment.

I was excited because I haven't seen my boyfriend since December of 2007. I was thinking about how I felt when I first started going with him. I know he was happy to see me and to feel me next to him after all the time that I was away from him. I remember how he smelled and he was looking so sexy. Damn I miss my boyfriend.

-KNHWJ

From The Beat: Well, when you get out of here, we hope you don't put something ahead of your feelings for him. You must have done exactly that, because here you are. It's easy to remember how much you feel for him when you're away, but far too easy to risk losing it when you get back out there.

The Last Hug

The last hug was my significant other. Damn, that moment was memorable and unforgettable. That hug was with a lot of love and passion followed with a passionate kiss right on the sunset of the beach, the most beautiful sight I had ever seen.

Now to think that I can't be with that person breaks my heart, makes me wonder what life would be without that person. For that person I would die and do whatever. I guess he had become my forbidden love.

-Esquivel

From The Beat: A passionate kiss on the beach at sunset is the stuff that movies are made of. We're not sure if you meant to write "he" had become your forbidden love or not, but we don't care if it's a he or a she. To be separated from the one you love can be a very painful experience, and one that forces you to think about lots of things in your life. We're sure that this person does not want you to die for him or her, but instead to live in freedom so that you can be together. What are you doing to make sure that happens?

Miss WNBA

Hey Beat, this ya girl Banana going crazy up in here. I go back to court on 8/11/08. Man, I'm up in this dumb-ass place.

To all my haters and ma goons, when I get out I'm playin' ball for SFCC. If I make it to the WNBA, I'm coming back to get my goons, and you know who you are. I will put ya names, but I can't.

Well, I got to go. To all, keep it up. Love to my ride or die. You know who you are.

-Banana

From The Beat: This may be a "dumb-ass place," but who is the dumb ass that put herself here? We know you want to get into professional women's basketball, and we hope you do. But to succeed, you're going to have to start putting more focus on getting your education and graduating and less on your "goons." Nobody but you can make yourself finish school, which is a requirement for professional sports. So let your goons take care of themselves, and start taking care of yourself!

Wonderful

The most wonderful hug I had was from my baby mom two days before I went down. First she hugged me. Then she gave me the best kiss she ever gave me, I swear. I was so mad when I came to the hall just because I already miss my baby mama.

-Philip

From The Beat: Whatever you did that brought you here was more important to you at the time than your girl. So, when you say you're "so mad" we're guessing that you're mad at yourself for giving power to the system over your life. Every choice we make has consequences — including possibly having to say good-bye to those we love.

Free Smokey

What's poppin' with The Beat? Ya know, I'm up in here again for the 4th time! Wow!

I'm just so tired of being in the halls havin' otha people tell me what to do. I can't keep wearing somebody else shirts. I'm going crazy up in this g-thang. If they don't let me free, I'ma go crazy in this place.

But hella people believe in me and want me free. My mom, my sis, my brother, my goons all want me free. But all I gotta say is free Smokey.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We always find it interesting when people write that they're tired of being here — but they keep coming back! We know that when you're really tired of coming back, then you won't come back! Until then, it's all in your hands. It's nice to have the support of family and homies, but until YOU want to be free (and we mean REALLY want it enough to stop doing the things that lead you to lose that freedom), then it won't matter who supports you.

The Last Hug

The last person I've hugged was my special girlfriend. I hugged her last. I can't be seeing her as much because her parents have problems with me and her together. She don't live in S.F. like I do. She travels from Hercules to get to here and get her education.

It's hard to get another hug from her. I would need to wait until school starts and pick her up after school to see her again. Then when I pick her up from school, I can get more hugs from her.

-Goofy

From The Beat: What are the problems her parents have with the two of you being together? Is it because you are locked up — or because your lifestyle too often leads to lock-up? What are you willing to sacrifice in your life to get another hug from her?

With Eyes Closed

With your eyes closed you'd imagine yourself free, with no problems in the world. You'd imagine yourself doing what you used to do. But wait, some noise wakes you or makes you open your eyes, and you think for a second you're still in the same place behind the same bars paying for what you did.

-Esquivel

From The Beat: When you fully wake up to where you are and how you got here, do you think about what you need to do to make this your last trip to the hall? What kinds of things would make that a reality?

I Wanna Get Out

This is my third time in the halls, and I wanna get out. The staff here say that what we do is stupid, but most of them don't know how we live 'cause I live grimy. I hang with killers and thieves daily. My PO say don't be with them, but I grew up with them so I don't really care what he got to say. He don't know that I do what they do. I'm in here looking at a bunch of boys every day all day. This ain't smooth. But I don't give a damn 'cause I'm young and I'm hyphy. Yeah, free me, man.

-BG

From The Beat: Yes, you ARE young if you think that you can do the things the OGs are doing without paying the price you're paying. After three times here, we wonder how many more times it will take for you to start thinking in a different way. As it is now, you're volunteering to hand over your freedom to a bunch of strangers in a place where all you'll see are boys. Three times would be enough for us!

Chinese Eyes

Ride or die
Live or fly to the sky,
That's how the game goes by.
Waiting to get back home,
The thought got stuck to my dome,
First I have to go by dumb-ass group home.
In and out of the halls,
Don't have time to use my balls.
Loved ones waiting for me,
Waiting to be free,
To drink and smoke with my loved ones as much as I please
The day I get out, get drunk and OD.

-Goku

From The Beat: You say you don't have time to use your balls, but we wonder if you have "the balls" to break free from this lifestyle that keeps seeing you hand away your life to a cold, uncaring system. That takes some courage, so we don't know if you've got that much courage or not. Time will tell. But we do know that if all you're thinking about is drinking, smoking when you get out, it won't be long before that will lead you right back to where you wrote this sad poem!

I'm Too Smooth

What's good with The Beat? Here go a rap:

Young savage big dawg
Status judge let my big dawg have it
Can't sleep, bad dreams
I ain't never had shhh and you can come and try me
I'm blank
Did smoke cigs, now I need another pack
Shhh, bad nerves, think I got it from my daddy
Straight factor, ain't even get the difference
A ninja neck training, everybody know me
Every 'hood I'm passing
V-12 under the hood I'm smashing
I done seen good shhh, I done seen bad shhh
Car full of hurt, full of purp
Got me laughing I'm '06 or '07
All Rocket ain't laughing
Young savage coming, ready every album
Bounce in the club, no search no hassle
I'm looking for a gutta girl... I see her I'ma snatch 'er.

-Rocket

From The Beat: Oh yeah, you're smooth, all right! Now, find a way to make this fantasy come true.

With That Shhh

Man I'm tired of hearing young punks talking about they doing hella long. Man, you ninjas knew what you signed up for when y'all got in this beefing shhh:
You knew you was going to have fights;
You knew you was going to be in shoot-outs with them guys;
You knew you was going to go to jail;
You knew you was going to have Task Force jumping out on you;
You knew you was going to have certain "officers" come to yo' house in the charger and search you' spot...
But hey, I ain't going to complain. If the feds or the state come for me, I ain't telling. Ey, look, I'm in it for the chedda and sky.

-Money Earn Vern

From The Beat: You may be in it fo' the chedda, but you keep putting more and more of that cheese into the system's pockets. Every time we turn around, you're being processed through the system again, making money for someone all along the way. We can't agree with you, either, that the "young punks" knew what they were getting into. We don't even think you know what you're getting into.

'Til The Bone

Chea, this the Cam ninja, reportin' 1,700 miles in the air. Yeah, you got it! Real high, but high off life, ya heard me? But I'm doin' the story on these "'til da bone" relationships, 'cause I got a lot of stuff on my mind, as you can see. But I only got a few of these kind of relationships, an' that's because you can't make too many of these to people, or it wouldn't be a point. I did it, 'cause I trust these people an' I'll give my life to the devil fo' anyone of 'em, but what it means is that no matter what happens, you an' that person are together 'til that casket get dropped, regardless of what happens, so you always gone have to put in an effort, at least every now and then.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: You obviously have a deep trust in yourself, and that's essential before you ever decide to trust anyone else. But as open hearted and trusting as you are, why don't you always keep one eye open, because everybody is vulnerable in some way and can get scared and panic in the face of real danger when they feel threatened, even if they truly love you, so be sure to protect yourself?

In My Room

When I'm in my room, I think of my family, and my girl and my thugs. Man, at the same time I think 'bout where I'm go be three to five years from now.

But yeah, its a lot I be thinking 'bout. And when I get out, I'm still go be thinking because I'm in jail. That ain't the only place I'm go be thinkin', but it's just a lil' something on my mind this week. I'm gone!

-JT

From The Beat: When you think about your future, what do you picture yourself doing? Are you thinking about a plan that you can follow that prepares you for living free? What's your plan?

You Die, You Live

In this beef, shhh, you never know what's gone happen. You die, you live. And when you get to see another morning, your expression is be happy as ever. But if you just now getting to the war, ain't nothing to see. Ain't shhh fun unless you like me and is addicted to the rush and the action. The only regret is that my lil' cousin died 'cause of him just standing up for what he believe in. RIP.

-Weezo

From The Beat: Just announcing your addiction to "the action" is not good enough. Lots of addictions lead to death, and all of them lead to pain for innocent family members. And we always urge addicts to confront their addictions and try to summon the courage to overcome them. We urge you to do the same.

With Eyes Closed

I lived most of my life with my eyes closed. I didn't start to open them until last month when I came in here. I was about to get a job and everything. I was almost about to get off probation this month. But I got a violation.

I'm about to get out and go to a group home, knock this time out and go home.

-BV

From The Beat: When you began to open your eyes, what did you see that was new to you? How have your newly opened eyes helped you? Examine that violation carefully, because whether you think they should or not, they are often responsible for sending people back into the cage! Violations are things you can control; we hope you do!

The Last Hug

The last hug I had was in here last Sunday. I gave my mom a hug. She was happy to see me but angry that I was in here. But she stayed and we talked the whole visit. When she left at the end, and that was my last hug

-BV

From The Beat: What did you tell your mom when she got angry at you for being here? What kind of promises did you make to her? Will you keep them?

It Won't Stop Me

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy V-Guttah still in this hell hole. Anyways, I'm washed! This hatin'-ass DA got me (LOL). I salute yo' hatin' ass.

Anyways, my last hug was in the spot with my female when the boys hit. Punk-ass ninjas, man, always got to mess with somebody. That's all they do is hate on a ninja, for real. But that won't stop me from doing me, even if I'm down or not, you dig.

To all my ninjas, stay up and remember we do time, time don't do us, you dig. Love y'all. With that I'm gone.

-V-G

From The Beat: Can you "do you" while you're locked up? How?

My Last Hug Was Heaven

The last hug I gave was to my wife. She was going to a party and I was hitting the block, fast. The hug was warm. It made me feel like I was in heaven as we hugged. The only thought going through my head was wishing I could hold on forever. I think my wife was thinking the same thing. I was straight up.

-MB

From The Beat: The only "false" word in this piece is "fast." You thought you were hitting the block fast, but how long has "fast" turned into? There's a moral to this story...

I Know Who I Am

Man, I'm in this thang depressed. I cry every night in my cell 'cause people keep tryna go against me, I swear, man, it's not fair. If I had one wish, I would wish everybody to die, so it can be just me an' Jotto, He's the one who gave me my first pill. If I get out, I'm gonna throw away all my slacks and by baggy jeans. I know who I am and Im happy.

-White Boy

From The Beat: Be careful what you wish for. If it was just you and the boy who gave you your first pill, don't you think things would get very boring very fast? (Not to mention that if it was just you two, all human life would soon be over, since two boys can't produce children...) So tell us, if you know who you are, what will you be doing when you walk out of here?

Right From Wrong And Wrong From Right

First off, dudes betta wipe they smirks off. It's D-Stackz, feel me. What's up with The Beat? Man, I'm holdin' it down waitin' to go to a grouper.

I'm here for some otha, but I ain't trippin', 'cause when I touch down I know what to do, you feel me. Wrong from right, right from wrong, just waitin' to touch down, go back to school, play sports and get a job.

I gotta see what my PO talking 'bout, though, before I do anything. But yeah, I'ma hit y'all, a'ight.

-D-Stackz

From The Beat: What do you think your PO is talking about? We're not sure where you'll be when you touch down, but we hope you follow your plans to go back to school and play sports.

Doing Time

What it do with The Beat? It's ya boy Gully Bub up in the building tryna make a million, tryna stack my chips so I can have my own island like Gilligan. But ninjas in here crying 'bout doing time. I'm like wow! Like they say, if you can't do the time don't do the crime.

Some ninjas be talking 'bout when they get out they gon get out the beef. Then why you get in the beef in the first place. Once you in it, ninjas always gon be on yo' line. How you go try to do dirt then try to say you ain't in it no more. All I got to say is if you can't stand the heat stay out the kitchen.

I'ma hold my head up in this g thang. I'ma get y'all later.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: Gilligan is a fantasy, nothing more than a television reality, so setting your sights on that life is like a child saying he wants to grow up to be Superman. It can't happen! We wish you'd scale down your dream to make it achievable: finishing your education, finding a decent job, and building a decent life. The answer to why a person would want out of the beef once they got in it is simple: The game appeals to children, and children are jumped in. But as children mature, they begin to think for themselves and make better choices for their own futures. That's called growing up. You advise people to get out of the kitchen if they can't stand the heat, but you haven't even begun to feel the real heat that can be applied, and we hope you never do.

Stop Talking About Other People

What's good with The Beat? I really too much to say today. But just a comment to them suckers. It's no point of speaking on a ninja behind his back. If you 'bout it, just do what you gotta do when you see a ninja, man, for real. 'Cause I'm a type of ninja that ain't finna say shhh about you suckers, just go show.

A message: that's how these ninjas on streets keep dying. 'Cause once you speak on a ninja he go tell somebody else, and the whole story done got changed by then. So like I said, just a note — keep ya comment to yo'self and just do what you do.

-Royce

From The Beat: It's true that when you talk on others, stories tend to change each time they're repeated, and people who think they know something about something really don't know anything that's real. So not talking about others is always good advice.

The System Ain't Shhh

Wassup with The Beat? It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, just chillin' and shhh at the Ranch! I just want to say the system ain't shhh. All they do is send you away and forget about you! Their job is nothin' but BS. Act like they doin' something good by sendin' some away. I wonder if one of their kids did something messed up, how would they feel if they went away for a year? Well, Beat, that's all I got to say! Until I touch down!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: It must be really scary and disorienting for young people, especially for those who have never been away from home before, to be forcibly sent anywhere away from their families, friends, young women, to have their whole lives disrupted, for a year or more. Do any of you wake up, feeling like you're crazy? Like you're suddenly on Jupiter? That can be cruel. Maybe anyone in authority who decides the fate of young people, should have to suffer the same fate at least once, so they can know what it's like. Why don't you write for The Beat your personal reflections on what it's like to be yanked out of your life?

With Yo' Eyes Closed

I feel it ain't safe to sleep with yo' eyes closed. It ain't safe. That's why a ninja like me got eyes behind my head so I could see everything. When my eyes was closed, I got caught up. Now look at me.

But ya know I'm a bounce back. Never roll over. My dogs don't know them tricks. This shhh gon make me better when I'm out and want me to stay away more. But I'm a get out and get a mille "fast," definitely legit, though, and ball out and we gone eat!

-D-Mac

From The Beat: Yes, we know you will bounce back. But will you bounce back here? That's the question we don't know the answer to. How will you make that happen?

Better Keep Yo' Eyes Open

What poppin' with The Beat, dawg? Yeah, this the kid Jigg. Yeah, with my eye closed I can't see what happen. So you can't see who trying to creep up on you. So every time you see me, I'm on high alert. And if you not, you might as well tell yo mama pick a church. So when you open up yo' eye and see, if you don't pray, the devil hunt you in yo' sleep. 'Cause it that easy to get yo' life snatch as quick as blink. And I don't plan on having my eyes close for at least 700 years, ya dig.

-Jigg

From The Beat: Having to live on high alert can drive a person crazy.

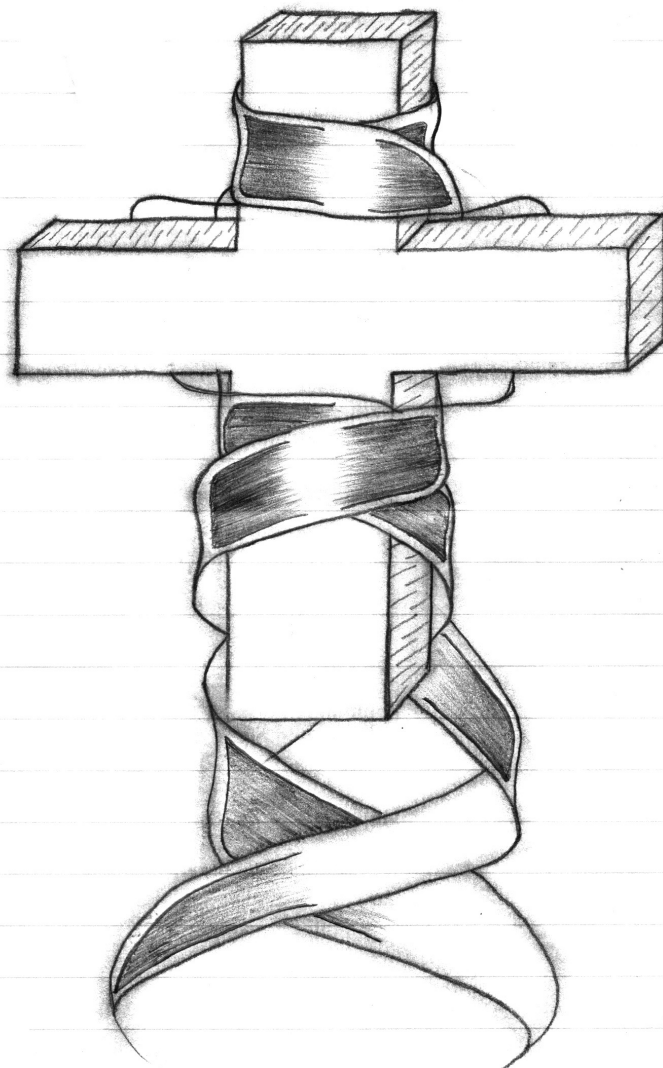
Life

What do you do when you hate ya life an' love it the same, an' people need you alive or it can possibly cause some internal damage because of the timeline and relationship, when a ninja beef more than he go home? A ninja runnin' from fame, but it keep callin' an' I'm gone have to answer, but my lifestyle gon' have to change, man, for real. What should a ninja do when his life is death, when the only time you get respect is when somebody want somethin' from you? When ninjas is jealous that you jus' as broke as the next ninja, but know how to bounce back, 'cause you only mess with grown females an' at least three years younger?

I'm answerin' all this fo' you. You man up, drink some dunny water—that 1800 or Bicardi and Jolly Rancher juice, but don't get caught up, 'cause the probation. I'm out.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: If you spend more time with mess in the streets than you want to, it's time to cut it down or out. Are you beefin' for others or for yourself? Maybe it's better to let your dunnies (homies) settle their own battles. And don't worry about your dunnies' or anyone else's respect—if you can't earn it by doin' whatever you know is right, you'll never really get it. Your dunnies seem to want you to lead, so lead them where you know they really need to go—out of any mess. They will respect you for it.



With Eyes Closed

Man, if my eyes closed, I would be a better person. It wouldn't be so crazy if my eyes closed, because of the shhh I seen. I became a monster. If my eyes were closed, I wouldn't know who to love, and maybe that would be a good thing. A lot of people kill over love. If my eyes were closed, I would know nothing about violence, drugs, sex, or murder.

Maybe we all would be better off.

-G

From The Beat: Do you mean you can feel better who people are, like intuit their characters, than tell what their soul is like by seeing them? That's really interesting. Maybe you've been burned emotionally. Maybe, if you lead with your heart, you'll escape being a monster, and love only people who sincerely love you, because you seem really good and open hearted.

I'ma Tycoon

Ain't no use to me lying, my ninja. I'm a tycoon shhh only hit me with like fifty. All my ninjas ride motorbikes, shopping on sprees 'cause that's what females like. You ride with your heat, I ride with mine, to it's ice in your watch, it's ice in mine too.

Nowadays, ninjas talk behind my back. So I bounce out now and talk behind my back, ninja huh....!

-Ran Flakes

From The Beat: If you're a tycoon, we're Bill Gates!

The Last Hug

The last hug I got was today 7/29/08 by my mom telling me how much she misses me and that my whole family told her to say the same thing — that they all miss me. It brought tears to her eyes, and at the moment it almost brought tears to mine. But instead I just stand strong and put a smile on my face and told her, "Mom, don't cry. Stand strong 'cause one of these days I will be out to hug every single one."

-Unsigned

From The Beat: We're sorry you forgot to put your name on this because we'd like to know who is lucky enough to have a mother that stands by her son and sheds tears for his current situation. You're right to tell her that you'll be out to give your family a hug, but getting out is only the first step. If you really want to give your family what they deserve for always being there for you is to find a way not to give up your freedom again.

Nobody Else

What to do when a ninja down and out an' don't got nobody else to turn to when that last person outside of ya family has problems an' don't know what you're goin' through? What to do when the person you put above the rest puts you with everyone else? What happens when you an' that person both lose a family member in the same month, and he leans on you for support? When you're lost an' the one person you look forward to guiding you home doesn't feel like it?

You know what I did? I drunk some dunny water and took it like a man, feel me? An since I don't got nobody else, I stayed to myself an' thought about my life, all the things I went through, and one of my thoughts was about karma, an' I don't recall doin' that to nobody.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: As frightened and alone as you must have felt, now you know how strong you are regardless of whether or not anyone comes through for you. It must be wonderful to know you can totally rely on yourself. Even though you were also hurting, did you comfort your homie when he needed it? Why don't you write The Beat about how you manage to survive whatever it is you've been through in your life, so those younger than you can learn from you?

We Victims

Let me say that everyone that's locked up is victims of the bullshhh system. They are the biggest gang and they get away with it! The system send us away from the fams and the homies, and they think it's cool! They think you gonna go through your program without thinking of home and the block! And second most important thing—they take you away from the females! Until I touch down!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: They don't take you away for nothing though right? Now that you have the time and space to think about your life at home, what do you think? Do you want to keep going the way you have been? What have you realized is really important to you? How can you use your time to develop that, and set yourself up to keep growing when you are released?

Family Too Strong

What's good with this Beat shhh? This the only Cam, ninja live and direct, but I jus' got some bad news that my uncle passed away. He sick fo' a few weeks an' had a stroke, an' yet another family member that was tryin' to keep a ninja out the way, but the reason the title is what it is, is 'cause my auntie been practicin' the mortician shhh fo' a little while, and it was her husband, so she wanna have the honors of doin' his body, and that side of my family goes to church a lot. They got they own gospel group an' church, but what lightweight confused a ninja is that since last August I only seen him about twice, and my auntie wanted to make sure I knew that's the second family member I lost this year, and it's too many already. But it was his time an' that's kinda why I don't wear watches, so I don't have no time. I'ma live e'ry day like it's my last, straight up. RIP, Elga Sr. and T. Weez.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: Our hearts here at The Beat go out to you. You do have a strong family. With your uncle gone, does that mean you'll have to or want to step up and lead your family now? If so, will you have to give up any mess that brought you to juvy and the Ranch, to be a good example to the young ones in your family? Can you do it? What talents, skills do you have, that can become a base for you to create a life of legal work, should you have to become the ballast, the strong one, the leader of your family?

The Reason I'm Here

My name is Ja'Quan, and I'm in juvenile for some shhh I didn't know anything about. So they put it on me. They're trying to play me because of what the officers put in the statement. But it's all lies. I'm ready to get out of this baby big house!

-Ja'Quan

From The Beat: We hope that if the police statement is "all lies" that you have evidence or witnesses to show that you are innocent. The system does make mistakes, just like all of us.

Block Thuggin'

What's good with The Beat? This go to the homies that's locked up doing time. Ninjas switch up in the halls. Ninjas got to stay solid, you feel me? Keep yo' friends close and enemies closer. Can't nobody got turned out but themselves and best believe I'm a have this game running through the veins my blood run through. Ninjas ain't gone be locked up forever. Love,

-Tre-O.

From The Beat: It already sounds like you've got the game running through your veins, but that your enemies and the system are making major cuts into your veins—your young life, your freedom, your future. What is it that compels you to hang in the streets—the drama, girls, cash? To just survive? Do you have any goals, plans, dreams beyond the street games? Or do you just win out there, 'til you get cut down to the bone, and lose?

The Last Hug

The last hug I had was today, from Dave from the Beat. But my last hug before getting locked up was my jaina (my girl). It was a love hug because it was February 14th on Valentines Day. I felt like she was the one jaina that was gonna be down for me. The one who'll give birth to my mini-me's .

She was feeling the same way. She though I was the one and only vato (guy) for her. The one who'll be next to her even while gaining weight throughout the pregnancy. Shhh, I actually love this woman, my woman!

It was lovely and everything, but I got a call from the homeboys so I bounced. I took the light rail to the spot. When I met up with the homies, we blazed, went to get something to eat. Then I got popped! I was arrested feeling confused, 'cause I didn't even know my charge until I got to the facility.

Life's hard! I still love my jaina though. Wait for me!

-Smirk

From The Beat: We read pieces like this, Smirk, and we wonder why anyone would risk losing something so precious and beautiful for what? Your boys? Blazing a blunt? Doing your "thang"? In a way, it appears to us that even though you're asking her to wait for you, you didn't wait for her, or put your relationship ahead of all those other things that you wanted to do. Growing up sometimes means having to make difficult choices. It's time.

Mommy's Baby Girl

Broken laughter, tears drop, smiles turn to frowns. My days feel incomplete.

Seconds pass but they feel like days.

Months pass but they feel like years.

Only seventeen more weeks - then Im out this place.

I can't stand it - the concrete walls.

I sit in my room thinking about you mommy.

I sit and feel like I'm just a broken promise.

Then I see the beautiful smile on your face and the way you hug me so tight.

You give me hope and give me faith.

Your words are what keep encouraging me.

I want to pour out my heart just to say that I love you and to say that Im sorry!

I promise mama, I will make you proud.

Only seventeen more weeks. Don't shed more tears for you or me.

I'll be home soon. T

il then, I'll stay strong and only for you. I love you.

-S

From The Beat: Cut this one out. Send it to her.

Birthday

I spent my fifteenth birthday in here. The only thing I got was a really good visit. I got a big burrito and a soda and I got to stay out of my room, all day.

-Chris

From The Beat: Here's hoping that you get to spend the next birthday at home.

Wyoming

I'm going to Wyoming soon, and I'm very excited to be leaving. Man, sometimes I get real sad in my room, being locked up and just missing my whole family.

-Chris

From The Beat: Learn a lot out there under the great wide sky that is Wyoming. Learn so much that when you come home, you'll never get locked up again.

Saying My Sorrys

I'm going to say 'sorry' to my mom. Well mom, I'm hella sorry, but I'm your son, tryin' to do right. I know you want me to do good, but why do I do the things I do and why do I get locked up? I want to do good and go back to school for you, 'cause something happened.

I feel God mom, and He told me to do good for you mom. So when I get out I'm going to do good for you and follow God and not do the things I did before. What I am trying to say mom is that I love you and miss you and I am going to do good. God said I am going to make it in life. So mom, I am happy that I have found God. And Beat, I am going to have a baby soon and I love my baby's mama.

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: That's a big change, Baby Boy. There's so much news in your piece that we don't quite know what to say, except that we wish you, and your mom, and your girl and your new baby the very best.

Time, Crime

I think people should do the time if they do the crime. They shouldn't cry about how much time they get. They thought they were hard when they were with their partners out doing crime. So don't cry now, punks. Hecka kids come crying when they get locked up.

So I'm just saying, shut that baby talk up in here. 'Man-up' and pay the punishment.

-Allen

From The Beat: Hey, weren't you a younger guy once? Didn't you experience what these kids are feeling? Have some heart, Allen. Or maybe this is your way of dealing with a tough situation.

What Drives Me Crazy

This is Hillbilly and what drives me crazy is all these guys trying to talk crap. I mean, just because you're locked up doesn't mean you should try to talk shhh. But whatever, all I need to do is kick back and not do anything until I see them on the outs.

-Hillbilly

From The Beat: And then what? Will you get revenge? And get sent back to the hall? Time to wake up Hillbilly. Life has more to offer than pounding on one another. Have you ever stopped to think about the way your 'enemies' have grown up. Chances are that you and your 'enemies' have a whole lot in common. Maybe the real enemy is a system that allows kids from struggling families to drop out of school, hang out on the streets and, out of frustration and desperation, to get into trouble. Time to educate yourself. Time to change the way things get done in some neighborhoods, maybe your neighborhood.

Court

I have court soon. I don't think I'm getting out. I ain't trippin' though. I messed up, so I got to pay. Being in here sucks. No privacy and staff disrespecting, but life goes on and you just have to do your time.

I hope I get out, but my PO says I won't. She's saying I need to stay here longer because I haven't been here long enough to have learned my lesson.

The DA says I can't go home, but needs me out of the hall. Looks like a group home for me. Not sure what else to say except, keep your head up, do your time, get out and move on.

-Ducky

From The Beat: You've got your eyes open. You've 'got the lay of the land' as they used to say, back in the day. Next step - while doing your time, take the time to figure out the roots of your dilemma. It will be painful to relive the events that led you to the hall, and we mean the way back events, things that happened even before you messed up, the first time. But if you do that, you'll be on the road to real rehabilitation. Understand the roots of your dilemma, and a new road will open onto your future. A better road. Good luck.

Cool For A Moment

I once thought drugs were good I just loved them, smoking weed, snorting cocaine, drinking beer. I loved it because it was an every day thing for me.

It was cool for a moment until I saw people starting to change, acting different, and stealing just so they could support their habits so they can take one more hit, one more drink. Now that's sad, it's messed up now they care more about drugs. Then they don't care about their loved ones. What a shame, it's a cold game.

Well as for me I live my life day by day drug free, and you know what? I love it because I see what that type of shhh does to people and it's not right, it makes me mad. Better drug free. I rather have a good time sober then high. Feel me? If not too bad for you. Go head a die ha fool.

-Drug Free

From The Beat: We are proud that you can and choose to live a drug free life. Don't just view things so closed minded however there are many people who want to quit but the drug has a hold of them and won't let go. If you were able to over come the drug maybe you can write a piece on you did it to share your story and possibly guide others.

RIP D

The last time I cried is when I lost my homie Downer, because he got shot. He was like my carnal to me because we were always together in the streets looking for trouble with other guys who talk shhh about us.

One day my homie was walking in his hood and some other guys came and shot him. When his girlfriend told me he was dead that's when I cried because he was my partner in crime.

I went to his funeral. I'm in juvenile hall, but in two months I'm going to Y-A for two years.

-S

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear about your friend. Don't add to a never ending cycle. What if you'd been walking with him that day? Try to use these next two years to get yourself together, raise your skills, and prepare for the rest of your life. We're sure D would want you to have a good life. What do you think he'd say to you, if he could?

Life Woooo!

Challenges are what make life interesting. Overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.

-Cuu-Cuu

From The Beat: This left us hoping for more. It's a wise saying, who taught it to you?

A Better Man

I have a mother, dad, 3 sisters and 1 little brother. I love my family, can't wait to get out and be with them.

I have a girlfriend name Lisa, and we both fell in love with each other. We both love each other so much so we started a family.

Once I get out of here I'm going to change my life and be a better man. I want to change for my baby, my girlfriend, and families.

I regret all the bad things I did wrong. I can't wait to get out of here to be with my girlfriend and families so I can take care of them. I want to be a better man when I get out and won't touch no drugs. I also wanna be a better dad too.

-Lil' Drama

From The Beat: We hope for the best and applaud you in your efforts to change your life for the better. Be strong and never quit, it will make you proud in the end. Your baby needs you clean and strong, and there!

Untitled

I wish drugs were never invented because even though I wasn't doing drugs my mom thought I was. She would check on my to see if I was on them or not so now I'm in here for so stuff I didn't even do but I'm doing drug programs in the hall to let her see even if I was doing drugs I would be trying to help myself and I wouldn't want to stay on drugs. I would want to get help stay in school and do right in life.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: Your mom checked on you because of her love toward you. Be sure to see that and remember that what you might see as your mom on your case is love and concern, and her wanting something better for you. We know people who wish they had people in their lives that cared about them the way that your mom does about you.

Fry Their Heads

I think that the worst drug is crystal meth. I think crystal meth is the worst drug because of what it does to you and loved ones.

The way it effects you is that as soon as you take that first hit your hooked on it. Your body wants more of the drug, and you would do anything to get that high again. I've seen what it could do to you. I have friends who use it and they are always in a bad mood when they are not high. They are up really late sometimes they don't even sleep for a couple of days. They spend their time stealing car stereos and other parts of cars and selling or trading it for meth.

They don't notice what the drug is doing to them until they are in too deep and overdose or fry their heads. That is also how it effects their loved ones, because they don't want to see their son or cousin go down that path and just throw their life away, and not make it any where in life. That is why I think crystal meth is the worst drug.

-Unknown 2 Society

From The Beat: From the sounds of it we think that you don't do drugs, and have a fresh perspective. Maybe when your friends see the life you live they'll realize they too could quit. We're not saying it's ever easy, but it is possible.

Orozco Pictures

To The Beat. I have been coming to your guys' program since the first day. I have also been asking Dave since the first day for the Orozco pictures. I know he is busy a lot, but if you guys in The Beat could remind him, that would be cool.

-H-Man

From The Beat: Consider it done (reminding Dave, that is).

Messed Up

What's up Beat? Well for my court I pretty much think I'm done. I could've been going to Utah, I mean I still have a chance but most likely it's not gonna happen though.

So I'm really not looking forward to getting out this year or the beginning of next so I'm just waiting and letting another year of my life down the drain. I'm looking at 12 to 18 months somewhere far. So hopefully nothing changes on the outside. Well that's pretty much all I want to say, so to my brother I love you and take care! Late!

-Mullen, Jr.

From the Beat: You might not have a choice on when you want to leave but you do have a choice on how to view your time in here. You can let this time go down the drain and make no changes or you can choose to take this time to learn to draw, read about subjects that interest you, or think and plan how to change your life for the better. It's up to you if you want to view the glass as half full or half empty. Keep that love warm for your brother...

Wasting My Time

Hey Beat! What's crackin? Me I'm still in here wasting my time. So about today's topic, I think it's a good one. There are a lot of bad drugs out there. Probably the worst drug that I think is heroin or any drug that you can inject. I think any drug that you could inject is bad because what if you inject it the wrong way, you could die or OD.

Also KJ, it flips out a lot of people and makes them want to stop a train or make them think they could fly.

There's meth too which I seen people steal for it. I've seen an older friend take his grandmother's jewelry just so he could get a couple of grams. I heard of people do things that they never would have done if they weren't into meth. Nasty stuff.

My drug of choice was cocaine. The thing about that drug is that I had a plug for it. It was some good shhh. I would get eight balls for forty and I was also slanging for one of my friends. I always had my profit, I used to sniff everyday. The crazy thing is that I never had a bloody nose. I would bleed a couple days later after doing it sometimes. I wouldn't put myself on blast, I wouldn't try to make it obvious about my snorting.

One time Christmas Eve I sniffed two grams in less than one hour, my breathing was heavy and I was just chillin'.

Now I've stopped. I just stick to bud and drink. If some stuff are there then screw it I'll hit it, but I don't go out looking for it or waste my money on it.

Well that's all Beat. Hopefully I get out soon so I can go back to regular high school and just chill. I'm out much love and respect. Alrato.

- Victor

From The Beat: We applaud your decisions in life in choosing to leave cocaine, yet...it all still sounds pretty close. What we've seen is that if you can just have a beer or a smoke, then you never change the things in your life that make you unhappy or dissatisfied. We're glad you left the cocaine, it shows your character and the strength and will power to strive for something better. We hope that you choose to change your life and use that will to graduate and find a path for a better future for yourself.

When Your Bones Break Easy

The worst drug is meth because people will do anything to suck on that glass. You will end up doing anything to get your hands on it like lie, cheat, and steal.

You won't care if you lose your family, your health, your bones break easy and it removes you from the world. I really hate that drug and anybody who had done it. Well Beat this is going to be my last Beat hopefully and I really enjoy reading your Beats, well till pencil meets paper again... I'm out

-Camacho

From The Beat: Drugs alter the way that one thinks, as so many other things in life Camacho. We hope that your time locked up helped shape and change your mentality for the better. We wish you the best here from The Beat.

My Last Beat Within

What up Beat well this is my last Beat because I get out on 7-27-08, sick huh they're letting me out two weeks early now I could go spend some time with my baby's momma, my one month old daughter, and my family. Its gonna be cool to finally get out. Well Beat til pen meets paper late--

-Gary and Ruby

From The Beat: We here at The Beat wish you the best and truly hope that from this day forward when you read The Beat Within it will be from the outs. Stay straight and keep out of trouble.

My Last Hug To My Girl

What it do Beat, well it's Baby Boy. Where are you Beat... The last person who I give a hug to was my baby when I was getting locked up.

Man, Beat I tell you. When I gave my girl a hug she was hella cryin', and she was askin the cop to let me go and she said I will take his place, just let him go.

So while I was gettin' locked she was hella cryin' and when her mom got where we were at her mom was hella cryin' and I felt so bad and they I was locked.

Damn, I'm so sorry baby for all the things I put you through, but when I get out and when I get out no more cryin' baby. Wow I thought I was never going to cry baby, but right now I'm cryin' baby.

I'm so sorry 'cause I can't ever talk when they lookin' at me, I'm so sorry but right now I have to go ...so I want to say I'm so sorry. And to all, well Beat I got to get back to the room so tell me who's the last person who you hugged?

Well Baby Boy is out... One love to all

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: All the pain you and your girl felt is from the love you feel for each other - so if you keep that love in the front of your mind, do you think it will help you stay motivated to stay out of trouble? We hope so.

Messed Up

What's up Beat? Well for my court I pretty much think I'm done. I could've been going to Utah, I mean I still have a chance but most likely it's not gonna happen though.

So I'm really not looking forward to getting out this year or the beginning of next so I'm just waiting and letting another year of my life down the drain. I'm looking at 12 to 18 months somewhere far.

So hopefully nothing changes on the outside. Well that's pretty much all I want to say so to my brother I love you an take care! Late!

-Mullen, Jr.

From The Beat: You might not have a choice on when you want to leave but you do have a choice on how to view your time in here. You can let this time go down the drain and make no changes or you can choose to take this time to learn to draw, read about subjects that interest you, or think and plan how to change your life for the better. It's up to you if you want to view the glass as half full or half empty.

The Worst Drug

Well honestly the worst drug is crack cocaine, heroine & tweak forget all that. Stick to Mary Jane, and Alcohol. Well I'm getting sent to rehab because the system thinks I have a drinking problem. I think that they are over-exaggerating.

I know I don't got a drinking problem but it's cool. I told my PO if he recommends rehab for 6-9 months I would rather get ranch or life skills, but he won't give me neither of them. He pretty much feels since every time I got caught I was drunk & had a knife I'm a threat to society. Haha it's whatever it's just another regular day in the streets of San Jose.

Well I'm off to the rehab or hopefully ranch. So I could see my bro up in the max unit. Keep your head up bro I'll see you. Well we will see what happens but until then I'm just chillin'. Late.

-W

From The Beat: You say you don't have a drinking problem but your PO thinks so. There's a saying that says "No single action defines you, but your actions in general let others know who you are." Think about how it is that you want to be perceived and how you have to act to achieve it. It sounds like you know first hand that the last thing San Jose needs is another drunk guy with a knife.

The Last Hug

The last hug I had was with my mother. She comes every week to come and see me. But all day I don't have no hugs from no one, even from your propia familia. So I get a hug every week. But it doesn't make me happy, you know, 'cause I have to wait for a week to get a hug.

-Demon Morgan

From The Beat: We're sorry you get so few hugs, but we hope you know how lucky you are to have a mother who comes every week to see, and to hug, you. There's only one way to avoid the pain of no daily hugs, and that's to find a way not to come back to this place once you touch down. You owe your mother that!

Who Believes In You

Who believes in me? No one does. When you get caught by the police and you ain't got nothing on you, they try to find something to get you locked up. They should know I got a future ahead and its also stopping from going to school.

They just a bunch of haters and it gots to stop. One time the cops tried to harass me to tell me what happened and they tried to blame me. I told them I don't know nothing and they threatened me of locking me up.

But they let me go and I had to walk like four miles to my house that was some BS. It's because they didn't believe me that some dirty shhh ...until now. I'm out peace.

-Carnelian

From The Beat: We're sorry about that incident with the cops. What about your family, do you have people in your family who believe in you? Most importantly, do you believe in yourself?

With Eyes Closed

With yours eyes closed, there's no violence, no murders and sexual harassment. But with your eyes opened, shhh, you can see things the you never imagine in your life, like hustling, drive-by shooting, stabbings, and murders. With your eyes open you see these things the way they are happening right now.

-Demon Morgan

From The Beat: It can be very tempting to close your eyes (by sleeping, by taking drugs, by getting drunk) and pretend that the problems you face don't exist. Unfortunately, that method only adds problems you'll have to deal with in the long run.

When I Get Out

I can't wait until the day that I get out. There are so much things that I want to do in life.

First I would love to go back to school and learn a lot more math and science. In a way I kinda like school even though I have to wake up every morning really early and attend class but it all pays off with an education in the end.

Next I would enthusiastically want to get a part time job specifically at a movie theaters. Why? Well because I love seeing people having fun meeting new people and watching new movies. also its an outgoing job. I love being outgoing.

Last, after a hard day at school and work, I would love to visit my new born baby and my beautiful girlfriend who I love so much with all of my heart. Theirs nothing better than seeing my baby my girl my family with some money in my pocket and an education to go with it.

I hope that I can accomplish these plans.

-Albert

From The Beat: So do we, Albert! Good luck and stay in touch with The Beat so we can hear how you're doing.

I'll Never See You Again

Hey there sexy readers it's Alex... well again I'm crying... I found out that my great-grandpa passed last Monday. It's hitting me pretty hard... I didn't even get to say goodbye...

I knew it was coming but... its still hard for me... it took me a while for me to wrap my mind about it ... but just like one of the topics I finally opened my eyes... and for a added topic I realized I'll never get that chance for that last hug... I thought I would... got my out and everything but... my transport felt I was too high a risk to go to his funeral.... Two topics in one... damn... and just like the song in my head:

"All that I know is I'm breathing
All we can do is keep breathing
All I can do is keep breathing
All I can do is keep breathing
All I can do is keep breathing now

-Alex

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you lost your great-grandfather, and also that it happened when you were away from the love and support of your family. Your writing here, though, is of a strong young woman who can handle the stress with grace - take it one breath at a time. Peace.

Won't Touch No Drugs

I have a mother, dad, 3 sisters and 1 little brother. I love my family, can't wait to get out and be with them.

I have a girlfriend name Lisa and we both fell in love with each other. We both love each other so much so we started a family.

Once I get out of here I'm going to change my life and be a better man. I want to change for my baby, my girlfriend, and families. I regret all the bad things I did wrong. I can't wait to get out of here to be with my girlfriend and families so I can take care of them. I want to be a better man when I get out and won't touch no drugs. I also wanna be a better dad too.

-Lil' Drama

From The Beat: We hope for the best and applaud you in your efforts to change your life for the better. Be strong and never quit, it will make you proud in the end.

The Worst Drug

Well honestly the worst drugs are crack cocaine, heroine & tweak... forget all that. Stick to Mary Jane, and Alcohol.

Well I'm getting sent to rehab because the system thinks I have a drinking problem. I think that they are over-exaggerating. I know I don't got a drinking problem but its cool.

I told my PO if he recommends rehab for 6-9 months I would rather get ranch or life skills but he won't give me neither of them. He pretty much feels since every time I got caught I was drunk & had a knife I'm a threat to society.

Just another regular day in the streets of San Jose. Well I'm off to rehab or hopefully ranch. So I could see my bro up in the max unit. Keep your head up bro I'll see you. Until then I'm just chillin with that sick feeling. Late.

-W

From The Beat: You say you don't have a drinking problem but your PO thinks you do. There's a saying that says "No single action defines you, but your actions in general let others know who you are." Think about how it is that you want to be perceived and how you have to act to achieve it. There's no re-hab for carrying weapons, except jail—but there would be a lot less drama if people didn't carry them. Do you need that knife to accomplish the goals that are really important to you?

Wasting My Time

Hey Beat! What's crackin'? Me I'm still in here wasting my time. So about today's topic, I think it's a good one. There are a lot of bad drugs out there. Probably the worst drug that I think is heroin or any drug that you can inject. I think any drug that you could inject is bad because what if you inject it the wrong way, you could die or OD.

Also KJ, it flips out a lot of people and makes them want to stop a train or make them think they could fly.

There's meth too which I seen people steal for it. I've seen an older friend take his grandmother's jewelry just so he could get a couple of grams. I heard of people do things that they never would have done if they weren't into meth. Nasty stuff.

My drug of choice was cocaine. The thing about that drug is that I had a plug for it. It was some good shhh. I would get eight balls for forty and I was also slanging for one of my friends. I always had my profit, I used to sniff everyday. The crazy thing is that I never had a bloody nose. I would bleed a couple days later after doing it sometimes. I wouldn't put myself on blast, I wouldn't try to make it obvious about my snorting.

One time Christmas Eve I sniffed two grams in less than one hour, my breathing was heavy and I was just chillin'.

Now I've stopped. I just stick to bud and drink. If some stuff is there then screw it I'll hit it, but I don't go out looking for it or waste my money on it.

Well that's all Beat. Hopefully I get out soon so I can go back to regular high school and just chill. I'm out much love and respect. Alrato.

- Victor

From The Beat: We applaud your decisions in life in choosing to leave cocaine, yet...it all still sounds like it's still really close by. It's hard to avoid the hole when it's always right in front of you. We hope you graduate from high school, and keep going!

A Hug on A July Fourth

My last hug was when my mom and dad came to visit me. But before that I gave my mom and dad a hug on July 4th, before I got locked up. And I remember everything like it's stuck in my head. That's my last hug -- and last Sunday. My family believes in me. They don't ever give up on me, either right or wrong they always be right besides me.

They say I could be anything if I try hard and if it doesn't turn out that way don't give up and keep going. Don't go after your dream, chase after it. My family has always believed in me and I love them for that.

-Denny

From The Beat: Maybe that's why your memory of the hug is from Independence Day - because your dream right now is freedom, and your family wants you to stay free!

Life Is Easier If You're Blind...

I think that life is harder with your eyes open than with you eyes closed because with your eyes open you see things that you don't want to see. With your eyes closed, you get to go through life without having to face reality. You get to go through life in a easier way.

-Stomper Malo

From The Beat: Well, life is easier in one sense because, like you say, you don't have to see the ugliness in life if you're not looking. But in another way, eyes closed is harder, because it leads to consequences like this. (This is a good example of why we want you to choose only one topic to write about; this piece is an excellent beginning, but we want to know so much more, like what you mean by "reality" and how and whether you plan to open your eyes. Next time, choose just one topic and write a whole page about it.)

My Mistakes

Everybody in life I believe makes mistakes because nobody in this world is perfect. I have made plenty of mistakes in my life to learn what I did wrong.

-Albert

From The Beat: Which are the mistakes you are trying hardest not to repeat? What have you learned from them?

Fry Their Heads

I think that the worst drug is crystal meth. I think crystal meth is the worst drug because of what it does to you and loved ones.

The way it effects you is that as soon as you take that first hit your hooked on it. Your body wants more of the drug, and you would do anything to get that high again. I've seen what it could do to you.

I have friends who use it and they are always in a bad mood when they are not high. They are up really late, sometimes they don't even sleep for a couple of days. They spend their time stealing car stereos and other parts of cars and selling or trading it for meth.

They don't notice what the drug is doing to them until they are in too deep and overdose or fry their heads. That is also how it effects their loved ones, because they don't want to see their son or cousin go down that path and just throw their life away, and not make it any where in life. That is why I think crystal meth is the worst drug.

-Unknown to Society

From the Beat: From the sounds of it we think that you don't do drugs. As a person that is sober and with a fresh perspective have you asked yourself if there is anything that you could do as a friend to help your friends out and try to overcome their addiction? If you are sober, this in itself helps to show them you did it, maybe they can.

I Have My Family

The only people that believe in me is my family. Even though I always get in trouble, they are always telling me that I could make it. I just got to try a little bit harder. As long as I have my family, I don't care what haters say.

-Stomper Malo

From The Beat: Many people in your situation don't have the advantage of a loving family. Listen to them... and try a little harder! (By the way, The Beat wants you to choose just one topic to write about, not all three, so that you can write a lot more...)

Cool For A Moment

I once thought drugs were good. I just loved them, smoking weed, snorting cocaine, drinking beer. I loved it because it was an every day thing for me.

It was cool for a moment until I saw people starting to change, acting different, and stealing just so they could support their habits so they can take one more hit, one more drink. Now that's sad, it's messed up-now they care more about drugs.

Then they don't care about their loved ones. What a shame, it's a cold game. Well as for me, I live my life day by day drug free and you know what, I love it because I see what that type of shhh does to people and it's not right, it makes me mad. Better drug free...I rather have a good time sober then high. Feel me? If not too bad for you. Go ahead and die a fool.

-Drug Free

From the Beat: We are proud that you can and choose to live a drug free life. Don't just view things so closed minded however- there are many people who want to quit but the drug has a hold of them and won't let go. The best thing we can do for others still using is to live clean ourselves--then they see that it's possible.

Check On Me

I wish drugs were never invented because even though I wasn't doing drugs my mom thought I was.

She would check on my to see if I was on them or not so now I'm in here for some stuff I didn't even do but I'm doing drug programs in the hall to let her see even if I was doing drugs I would be trying to help myself and I wouldn't want to stay on drugs.

I would want to get help stay in school and do right in life.

-Lil' Sam

From the Beat: If you take the actions of her checking on you to see if you were on drugs, it is evident that the reason that your mom did that is because of her love toward you. Be sure to see that and remember that what you might see as your mom on your case is also love and her wanting something better for you. We know people who wished they had people in their lives that cared about them the way that your mom does about you.

With Eyes Closed

Now that my eyes are open to new reality, I learned that this life is not good, that being locked up I'm not going to get to see my family because I'm in here.

I'm a smart bright kid but just sometimes people make mistakes so they could learn from them, but I miss my family especially my mom and dad, and that's why when I get out there's gonna be change in me for me and my family.

-Denny

From The Beat: You got it - use that smartness to take this as a lesson, so years later you can talk about how getting locked up was the "best thing that ever happened" to you.

When I Get Out...

The last hug I remember I got was from my carnala. It was three weeks before I got locked up. Now that I sit in my cell and remember, I get sad because I know that I am going to be locked up for a while, and I won't be able to get another hug from her. But when I get out, I will give my carnala a lot of hugs.

-Stomper Malo

From The Beat: We're pretty sure you weren't thinking about all these possible consequences when you did whatever it was that gave the system the power it needed to take you from her. Now that you're experiencing the consequences of that thoughtlessness, we hope your future actions will be different from the ones that led you here so that you will be able to enjoy those hugs again!

My Block

This is the block you will see me posting at day and night. I call it my home. This is where all the fun happens. I got lots of good memories and a couple bad ones.

One of my lil' homies passed away there. Lil' Rascal was what we called him, a firme homie that will never let you down. Me and him will always get grifos and then go munch. I miss him a lot. May you rest in paradise. We had lots of good times there. We could kick it there 24/7 and never ever get tired of it, just post it like the peligrosos we are. Every day I'm there I think about you. I wonder how life would be with you here.

-Silencer

From The Beat: We're sorry about your friend paying the ultimate price for posting on the block, and we wish it would make you re-think what you're doing. The block doesn't miss Lil' Rascal, because the block has no feelings for anything. It's just a block, nothing more! To die for a piece of dirt and cement makes no sense. As for being a peligroso, look around you. You're a peligroso behind thick walls and under the minute-by-minute control of strangers. Sounds like it's time for a new self-definition.

Just In Love With You

If I tell you that I love you and I put my trust in you, if I say that every minute all I do is think of you, will you do the same for me?

Are you really down for me, let me know just how you're feelin'.

Would you give it all for me. How would you feel if I told you all I ever do,

is reminisce of the times that I spent with you.

Rollin through the park on a Sunday afternoon,

dedicating slow songs to say that I love you.

It's for any honey with the pretty brown eyes

never giving up on me never telling lies,

making promises together we ride,

I put this on everything, I'm glad she's mine

And I love it when we are all alone,

never miss a beat when slow jams are on baby girl.

-Monkey

From The Beat: Monk3y, we knew that you had it in you to write. We hope that thoughts of being in the outs and your words on what are the things that matter to you keep you thinking on how to stay out of here next time.

Locked Up And Blind

I got blood shot eyes

Unable to realize as I throw the dice

Living in that fast lane

Labeled insane

My life been chosed

So my eyes are closed

Now I'm riding on my rivals

'Cause I'm all about survival

I'm a target to the government making these laws

Saying that I'm a lost cause

"Give him 40, and we'll make sure he don't see light of day"

My eyes are open, locked up doing time

Now I'm blind

-H-Man

From the Beat: We're not sure we understand what you're trying to say. Do you mean that it took getting locked up before you opened your eyes? If so, how will your newly opened eyes play a part in how you live your life after the hall? Can you give us an example of decisions you made with eyes closed, and how those decisions will be different with eyes open?

The Beat

I'm going to write about this girl.

-Mas Firme

From The Beat: Well, you could write about anyone in The Beat really, as long as you're not using the Beat to communicate or hook up with someone else "inside." You can write about your feelings, your future, your hopes, dreams, wishes to be part of a good relationship...

RIP D

The last time I cried is when I lost my homie Downer, because he got shot. He was like my carnal to me because we were always together in the streets.

One day my homie was walking in his hood and some other guys came and shot him. When his girlfriend told me he was dead that's when I cried because he was my partner in.

I went to his funeral. I'm in juvenile hall, but in two months I'm going to Y-A for two years.

-S

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your friend. Don't add to a never ending cycle. Think about where you would be had you acted differently. We're sure D wouldn't want to see you locked up.

Hurting Inside

I look up to the sky
And I start thinking of you.
A stabbing in my heart
Has me feeling pain because
I thought you loved me too.
Boy, you're not mine anymore
'Cause you walked out that door
And there's nothing I can do.
You left me, so alone and empty
Even though I was so true.
You think it's funny
But you can really cause some pain.
You're a thousand miles away,
Just so hard to find -
And it's making me insane.
I miss you a lot but I know you forget
The love we once had.
Our love was so hot-
And sometimes I hold you tight,
But that's all in my dreams.
I tell you that "I love you"
And you ask me what that means.
I know that for my love
You know longer care.
There's a sudden smile
On my face
As I look above
And pray
You come back to me soon.

-Beatrice

From The Beat: Are you sure you want to be with someone who apparently doesn't want to be with you? That sounds to us as if you're being unkind to yourself. We appreciate your honesty, that's the first step.

I Do Cry

The last time I cried was when I was thinking of my little sister. I feel like I let her down. It hurts my feelings that she probably doesn't remember what her big sister looks like. That sounds stupid, but my sister means so much to me, and when I think of her I cry because I think of the pain I put her through.

-Samantha

From The Beat: So, Samantha, don't do it again. But don't worry, either, about being remembered. We guarantee you, she'll remember you.

What Makes Me Different

I'm very unique. First off - my swagg is bad. Gets most beezies mad, but I don't care - that's my job. And I love it even more when my name stay runnin' in their mouths, because they makin' me famous, ya dig.

But yeah, what makes me original is my race. Bein' mixed is definitely a plus - black, Puerto Rican, Cuban - and I speak Spanish. Yep, yep!

I'm very intelligent and have a whole life career ahead of me. I bust flows here and there. But you can always catch me in the lab, droppin' hot 16s. I dance for days straight, getting it.

Been around turfin' for years and barely learnin' how to glide. Shady biz. I'm also a youngsta in the wind, drivin' a Benz. You see me fresh. Yeah, you get it.

In two and a half months I'll be seein' the sun. Peace.

-Sha T

From The Beat: You're a busy girl, Sha T. By the way - where'd you get the Benz? Or are you putting us on?

The Last Hug

The last hug I got was from my mom. At that time, I felt really sad because that was when I first saw her while I'm in here. I got so shame, but pride because I also cried. I was also happy because I know she's there to support me.

Well, I'm out. Long story short. My heart beats while I breathe.

-Saetern

From The Beat: Your heart not only beats, but we can tell it is warm and caring. You are lucky to have a mother who loves and stands by you. Now it's your turn to return that love. When you touch down, don't give the system the power over your life to take you away again!

The Last Hug

What's crackin' Beat? Me coo' - just waiting for these days to go by! I got 10 days left! I can't wait!

Anyways, today's is about who the last person I hugged. It was my bestest friend, India "Jesscia". I love her and when I bounce out, I'm gonna miss her. But anyways, we're just posted. Hoha, feel me.

Well, that was my last hug, and she's gonna be my last hug when I walk out of here. Well Beat, I'm out. Alrato!

-Babbiejo

From The Beat: Friendship is just about the greatest of life's gifts. We can tell that you cherish it. We wish you well. Be safe. Do good.

Eye-Opening Incarceration

I used to walk around proud but really alone, eyes shut closed. I used to be sarcastic, a bully, and loud. Many a times, it was my friends - I supposed. I guess I didn't realize fully that not even my daddy could save me. Though to him, I was a leader.

I was really a low-life. I let others control my freedom - acting like a trained dog, not like a young girl. They had me steal. For why? That's not me. I want to go back to the same smart girl, full of curls.

No longer down this hole I will fall. The longer I sit here, the more I hate them all. So here I am, with eyes pried open.

-A changed woman

From The Beat: You'll get another chance. Make the most of it. You know what not to do. That's half the battle.

The Last Hug

I hugged my mom like I never did before when she visited me in here. I was sad and she was full of tears. When she left, it hurt like it never would before.

It reminded me of the hug before I came in from this girl I knew. There was a smile, then a frown and came her tears. She'd hug me for minutes. When I heard the sobbing stop, I looked down and she looked up. Then came her beautiful smile, then a joke and a laugh.

I smiled back, looked in her eyes as I still hugged her, then let go. She walked to her car and took one last look, knowing that when I get out, I'ma still remember that hug. As she turned away I saw her tears streaming down her face, but she was trying to hide it as she went into the car.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: In truth, this sad memory brought tears to our eyes, too. Saying good-bye to one who loves you without knowing when you might see each other again must be one of the most painful experiences one can have. We're sorry you had to say good-bye under these circumstances, but we're also happy for you that you have someone so loving in your life.

You Should Treasure All Hugs

The last person I hugged, she was a very close person to me. It was a sad hug. A hug of parting. All hugs of parting are like that—sad, knowing that you won't see someone important to you and to them, even if you don't have any good feelings for them. Most hugs of parting are sad and most (people leaving each other) have frowns.

There sometimes is happiness in these hugs. This person was my last hug. After that, I am locked up.

You should treasure all hugs. I treat almost all my hugs as my last. This hug wasn't all bad, though--some of it was good--someone who cares about me, showing it to me through an embrace.

"Treat everything as your last, and everyone will miss you. Treat them normal, no one will miss you."

-Nerdy Maertz

From The Beat: Now that you're in juvy, isn't every good-by hug you give to your family something you remember vividly long after they have left? Everything is heightened when you're deprived, you're right. When you're home again and can hug your family whenever you want, will you still remember when you were locked up and couldn't even see them very often?

In My Life

The Bible says always love your mother. I love my mom more than anything on this earth. My family is one of a kind. We fight, we laugh, we cry, but one thing will never happen is, we'll never split apart.

I lost my grandmother from cancer. That was the worst day of my life. It turned my whole family upside down. All my brothers and one sister—all took the side effects for this tragedy. Then we only had one grandpa and he was an alcoholic and he died from it.

Then I started stealing and takin' in hundreds of sins. I could never change all the things I did. If I could, I would, but it ain't, 'cause I can't. The Bible said, you shall not take other's bread and it's better to go to heaven with one hand than two, and one eye than two. So if you want to go to heaven, don't steal from others and watch what you see.

-Adrian

From The Beat: Is it because your grandma died that you started to steal and mess up? Sometimes despair and terror of being forever without someone we love can cause us to punish the world and ourselves for what we can't deal with. Now that you know what you may be doing, can you calm down, stop any trouble, and continue your life, especially now that you've gone home? We hope so.

Can We Be Genuinely Sorry Without Getting Caught?

Why do we act sorry when we get caught in situations we cannot get out of? Why do we cry and act like we're innocent, and beg for mercy, and cry to God's name?

If we would have never ended up in the predicament we're in by doing stupid stuff, we would not cry, beg God for mercy and act innocent, knowing we're wrong.

Just saying some people aren't sorry, but what they're sorry about is they got caught doing whatever they were doing. If they never got caught, they would probably continue to do the same stuff that ended them in juvenile hall.

-Brandon

From The Beat: You've got it right, some people never think seriously about what they did, in their hearts aren't really sorry, but regret only that they got caught and have to pay for it somehow, maybe in juvy. What about you? When and how have you learned that you won't do whatever ever again, no matter what, and stuck by it?

My Future Wifey

My future wifey, Jessica, she is such a strong person. She is gonna stick with me no matter what situation I get in, she will be by my side always.

She is my crutch when I'm down. She holds me up. I miss her so much—her smile, her voice, and most of all, her beautiful dark skin. I wish I could hold her, but I look forward to that when they free a ninja.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Why, when you have such a lovely lady, do you risk your relationship by messing up and going to juvy? How is she handling your being inside? How do you support her when she needs you? Sounds like you've got a good thing going with her.

The Beat withheart

Me And My Crew

What it do?

Coming through
saying "What it do?"

The youngstas from the crew
you better stay in school
or you're going to be a fool.

Aqui estoy (here I am) in the Marin County hall
locked down with my homie.

All we could think of
is to be with the crew.

I don't go to school

I just kick it with my homies.

My uncle is an OG.

My dad don't care what I do
he just does not want me to die.

-Rey

From The Beat: We had to edit your piece so you don't incriminate yourself. You write that your crew and you don't go to school, and that your dad doesn't care what you do, but you also write to your Beat readers that they should stay in school, so what about you? Do you want to go back to school and think you should? If so, talk to your counselor in juvy and have him/her set you up to register in school now, so you can start again in the fall. Listen to your heart now, over the voices of your family and homies, especially when you know you're right.

Biting

Biting my nails this morning,
nervous about getting out.
Bones shaking, knees shaking
when I step into the courtroom.
And getting out still a secret.
Hoping God is there and on my side.
Silence, before the judge chooses
to let me out, or not, and nothing
but old memories before my eyes.

-Josh

From The Beat: This is a powerful word picture of your state of mind at a moment in time. We can hear those bones shaking and your knees knocking. Good writing.

Mama

Even though I act crazy I got to thank the Lord that you made me. Always, through all the drama, I could always depend on my mama. Even when I felt hopeless, she said the words to put me back in focus.

At times I go crazy thinking about my number one lady, my mom. In my cell I reminisce on the stress I cause. It was hell hugging on my mom from a jail cell.

-Mama's Boy

From The Beat: Time to pay your mama back by earning and keeping your freedom. She's going to be needing your help, one day, and you need to be ready to provide it. You can't do it from the inside of a prison cell.

MLK, Cesar Chavez, Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy

If they were still alive, I think all this racism that's still out there wouldn't be. I think the nation would be five times better than it is right now, and everybody would be happier. I'm not saying everything would be great or that all racism would be over with, but there would be a lot more peace, and the world would be different.

-Bg

From The Beat: Sadly, we're stuck with what we've got, until we work harder to change the way things are. We have made some progress, though. Do you think that MLK and RFK would have imagined that at this time in the nation's history, an African American would be his party's candidate for President of The United States?

The Fact

The fact of the matter is that jail is where I live.
I'm tryin' to keep my head up – livin' do or die.
My moma said she's fed up, and late at night she cries.
With all the odds against me,
somebody tell me why I'm sittin' in the penitentiary,
25 to life.

-Hurt

From The Beat: We don't know why that might be. We hope it's not what you're looking at. We do know that you've been writing some mighty fine pieces, lately. And we want to see lots more.

The Safest Place

The safest place must be my sister's. It's the only place I can go to be comfortable. It's an apartment – the only real place one of my family member's has. I can vent there. I can be happy, I can be sad, I can be mad. My sister and niece live there. They are the people I would want to die with, if I were dying.

-Josh

From The Beat: We're glad you have a place where you can be who you really are. And we're glad you aren't dying. Get your act together. Do you know what you need to do? That's the first step – figuring out why you fall into behavior that makes you unhappy, that leads you to the hall.

First Impression

You get the first impression by the way I look.
They say: he's a snake and a no good crook.
But just 'cause I'm broke don't mean I'm a punk.
Let me explain myself, like a map with some funk.
God sees how the system's got me trapped
on a one way road. All I got is my brains and bones.
Livin' in the dark with a cold heart
wanting to see some lightning come my way.
It's no secret I live in silence, waiting to meet my maker.
Pain's heavy, like an anchor.

-Sinner

From The Beat: You can hoist that anchor, mate. Keep writing. You have a gift. Sail on, sail on into a brighter future. You can take your gift for language and do things with it that, right now, you can hardly imagine. Stick with it. Read you butt off. That's how you'll discover what the great writers are doing. And maybe one day you'll feel comfortable in their company. Write on !



My Infor

My weight's a buck seventy-five.
Height: I stand 5'5", with pride.
And a pair of dark brown eyes.
My soul I'll never loan the key to.
My heart, you own.
I'm your king.
You're my queen.
When you're with me,
I'll fill your sleep's steam.
If this love is wrong
I don't wanna be right.

-Lj

From The Beat: We hope you sent a copy of this to your sweetie.

So Fine

I had an ex-girlfriend and she was so fine, she was just there all the time and she was nobody else's just mine.

I guess you could say I didn't love her, I was just attached. But some stuff went down and now I can't ever see her again. Because now I'm facing 17-23 years in the pen.

I wish I could see her at least one more time. Now I hate to get to know anybody, I say heck with love I don't need no-one.

-Nuevo Mexico

From The Beat: Don't give up, Nuevo Mexico, life's not over, at the moment it may seem it is, but maybe this is a new start for you. Hold your head up, expect the worst and hope for the best because one day you will be able to love again. You may have to find how to love life in broader terms and different ways than having a girlfriend. When you're inside you may have to feel and express love in new ways. Good luck.

On My Mind

The last hug was on the 27th of July, and it was a really dark night, but we use to make our light bright.

Our love was so tight, and we use to fight with all our might. The man of my dreams is on my mind, but he always use to spend more then a dime. He will always be mine, and he is so very kind. I wanted to be with him since nine, I hate for him to lie and deny. I hope he is gonna still be mine, we'll that's all about the last hug I had and it was very sad.

-Antonette

From The Beat: It's hard to leave someone you love with only a hug. It's even harder when you're not sure when you'll see that person again. Change your ways so you can get that hug of happiness.

The Last Hug, The Last Kiss

The last hug the last kiss that is something I will try to miss. Reminiscing on them days we use to hug and kiss.

You are someone I use to love and kiss, but you turned around and said heck with you you. Now I'm not going to waste my time on someone that is just going to disrespect, I'm just going to turn around and say the heck with you.

Don't even trip you're someone I will never miss, so turn around don't say "I love you babe."

-Lil' L

From The Beat: After reading your piece it seems that you are missing this person, and it was a hug you wished you would have never had? Give us more information; you leave us hanging with many questions. It sounds like this dialogue hurt you, and that maybe it's worth repairing.

What's Got A Hold of Me?

Mary Jane has a hold on me
I can't get Mary out of my head
She's always on my mind
I love the taste of her

Especially when she flows threw my throat down to my lungs

One day I got to cut her loose

Because one day she'll destroy my life

It's not easy losing the one you love, you know

-Jody Gurl

From the Beat: You are right Jody, it's not easy losing the one you love, but your reference to Mary Jane is not love—it's an addiction. As you said, you have to cut her loose before she destroys your life. You couldn't be more correct, because if you don't quit, you might find yourself spending more time where you're at now.

Who Believes In Me?

The one who believes in me is the one who believes in all of us. He knows what our future is, and where we will land up. No matter what any one else says or does God is the one who believes in me, and never predicts bad things in my life. He gives us all hope for our future he is who believes in me.

-Yoron

From The Beat: We're glad you feel the love of God, the love, the faith in you, the endless possibility. What if you had that belief, faith and love for yourself too?

*I'm not going to waste my time on
someone that is just going to disre-
spect, I'm just going to turn around
and say the heck with you.*

Tumble and Fall

My eyes are closed

I can not see, the world around me

is blank and shallow--but if I open my eyes

I know I will not understand what I see

because of all the people who are hating and evil.

So I keep my eyes closed.

Even though I tumble and fall.

I know I will live in a world of darkness

but that's ok at least I know I'll live care free

-Masin

From The Beat: A well written poem, Masin, but remember living in a world of darkness is by choice. You don't have to live in a world of darkness to be care free. Many people live care free lives, and live in the light. Remember life is about choices, choose the right one.

For You

Stuck with no life, lost without you

The hardest decision I made is when I tried to let go of you

You were my one and only daughter

Now I no longer have you

Stuck not knowing what the heck to do

I am no longer able to love and hug you

The decisions I will make from now on will be from my heart for you

-Lil' Lonely

From The Beat: Lil Lonely we understand how you feel, and after reading your last writings it's now time to talk to a grievance counselor. You may say it won't do any good or talking to a professional will not help, but it will, the longer you keep it bottled up the harder it will be for you to deal with your loss. Get the help you deserve.

Pride/Family, Time/Freedom

The hardest decision I ever had to make was having to swallow my pride, picking up a new charge or just saying puck it and rushing that fool. Is my pride or my family more important? Freedom or time?

-Yoron

From The Beat: We at the beat are not sure why you're locked up, but if you chose your pride over your family, the question to you now is. Was it worth it? You didn't say either way on what path you chose. Write us back and let us know if it was Pride over Family, or Freedom versus Time?

Locked up ... Again and again and again...

The last time I cried was a while ago.
You would never be able to know,
on my face it would never show.

But now, I sit, I wish and I wait that
next time it wont be the last.

I try to speak, but they tell me to take a seat.

I just wanna leave, never come back.
But I keep coming back.
The officers here are starting to think I'm wack!

-Alexis

From The Beat: What can you do to stay out of the hall? We will listen to you speak whether you are locked up or not. Maybe letting yourself express your feelings, crying, speaking, or writing will help. Hopefully the next time you're released will be the last time you're locked up!

45 Years to Life

The last time I cried was when my homeboy got sentenced 45 years to life. He is my best friend. I cry for him everyday. He is only 17 years old, he does not deserve to do 45 years to life. He is locked up and I know that deep down inside he did not really hurt anyone. I love you, I do.

-Tania

From The Beat: It is sad to hear your friend being so young and receiving a 45 years to life sentence. This is a tough time for your homeboy, you and your friends. Don't keep your emotions on this event bottled up, talk about it with family, friends, and teachers and you can always write to us.

Chiva and Meth

The worst drug you can ever try is chiva because when you use chiva you get all dumb and stuck and lazy. Another worst drug you can try is methamphetamine because it also gets you all paranoid and all mad at everyone. It makes you not go to sleep and hallucinate things. You see things you're not supposed to. It makes you want to pick at your face and be grouchy all day. That's the two types of drugs I think are the worst of all.

-Natalia

From The Beat: Have you had experiences with these drugs, have your friends and family had experiences? Thanks for your input, hopefully others will read this and think otherwise if they're placed in a situation involving these drugs. They don't sound like much fun.

The Day I Got Locked Up...

The day I got locked up to me was the end of the world. I was not use to people telling me what to do and when to do it.

I missed my mom and I wanted to go home soo badly. But there was no way I could. On Saturday it was visiting day and my mom came to visit me. When I seen her walk through the door my heart dropped. And when it was time for her to leave and I gave her a hug I did not want to let her go.

But I had to I didn't have a choice. These were the consequences of the choice I made. Even though I'm almost out I still feel the same way I did when I first walked in my cell.

-Rebecca

From The Beat: Has this experience changed you? We're glad to hear you're almost out and we know you'll be able to stay out once released. Remember that you have to let go of what you love when you get locked up, and hold on to what you love!

I Felt So Bad

Last time I cried was when I got locked up and I told my mom I hated her. I felt so bad. I think it was really disrespectful. I was really depressed when I first came in here. I wouldn't stop crying.

-April

From The Beat: Have you spoken to you mom since being locked up? Tell her how you feel. It would probably mean a lot to her to hear that you're sorry.

I'm Married. Married to the Game!

I smoke weed to feel the heat, I drink so that I really think.

When I go out on the street I feel that I can't be beat. I make sure I have that dough before he opens the door. I sell my body to get that money.

But I consider myself a businesswoman cause I do it to take care of my son.

But at the same time I put that dough in someone else's pocket

hopin' one day I'll just stop it.

But I really feel I can't cause I'm married, married to the game.

-Precious Love

From The Beat: This is a great piece of work, but we think you should get a divorce! You should consider a career change, being the businesswoman you are— something where the dough would go in YOUR pocket. You have a great knack for writing and The Beat has enjoyed your work. Maybe you should pursue a career in writing? Try and stay clean and please keep writing. It sounds like you've been through a lot. Try and find someone to talk about these things. And divorce the game! Your son needs you to take care of yourself, so you CAN be there for him.

*I missed my mom and
I wanted to go home
soo badly.*

When I look at the Stars

When I look at the stars I look at your face in the sky.
It's so hard to lo forget your beautiful face.

When I look at the stars, I look at your smile in the stars.

I feel my heart crying.

-Alma

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing with us! In Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet, Romeo also talked about Juliet being so beautiful he compared her to the stars in the sky...

The Devil was Dragging Me Down

In 2006 I was addicted to methamphetamine. I used maybe 16th a day, which is a lot. I use to break out excessively. I felt like the devil was dragging me down to hell. I was arrested after 3 months of being addicted. I had used meth before that but was not addicted. I was sent to rehab for meth. Ever since then I have been clean. Yay me!

-Lover Girl

From The Beat: Congratulations for staying clean!! How long has it been? How is your life different being clean? Thanks for your input! We say Yay you too!

My Blind Past

Four months ago before I came, I was a blind careless gang banger I didn't care about anything or anyone except me.

I use to say that I cared for my family but my time in here made me realize that I was lying to myself, cause if I cared I would not be up in here while they were out there crying every time they heard my name.

Now that I'm here I have opened my eyes wide open. I seen stuff that was affecting my family and I wasn't doing anything to make it stop. Now that I have awakened I have stopped that painful chain and found better ways to give my family happiness--instead of a lot of pain.

Now I have realized that my family is the way to get away from the painful life, and that for the rest of my life I want to stay with my family. That's it for now to all, stay up and neva fall down.

-Christopher Columbus

From The Beat: It sounds like your family is giving you a lot of support. We are glad you've been doing deep thinking, remember your realizations! Keep this piece you wrote and tape it to your wall or somewhere you won't forget what you said.

Never Promised

I believe in myself but I don't feel like changing. nobody can make me change because I feel you life is all about fun. Life is too short. Tomorrow is never promised. Without those things I would probably go crazy.

-DA

From The Beat: We edited. We think life is more complicated than all about fun. Is your life fun right now? You say without all the things we edited out that you would go crazy, and we wonder what are you trying not to look at? It might be interesting to face your self.

Group Homes

Hello Beat Within writers and readers my name is Jesse but people call me Happy Feet. Someone gave me that name when I was in New Foundations and I just stuck to it.

Well anyways let me tell you a story about when I was at a group home. I was doing good for a couple of days but then I ran away and committed a crime and got arrested and when my real mother found out I had gotten arrested again she was pissed off.

Well Beat Within that's all I got for today and all you people out there going to group homes I wish you the best.

-Happy Feet

From The Beat: Hmm sounds like "Running Feet" would have applied as well. You only stayed a couple of days? How do you feel about your Mom being disappointed? What's up with you? How are You?

Eyes Closed

Living with eyes open I see bad things, I see bad people, I see drugs and bad things. My eyes are open. I see a cell, I see this toilet right by my bed.

Why can't my eyes stay closed so I don't have to see these things anymore? To have a life let me lay to rest so I don't worry about stress, so I don't worry about family. Let me close my eyes so I don't see these bad things of worry about family.

So let me close my eyes and rest. So, that I can dream goodnight.

-Jose

From The Beat: It sounds like your worries are keeping you up at night. Can you get some help with some of what your stressing over?

Prostitution

When I was young like 11 my father sold me out to some of his drug addicted friends for his fix. They started to past me around like a rag doll till I started to bleed.

I started to cry and call for my mommy they didn't like it so they put a sock in my mouth. I was held down by my hands and legs when they were done, they proceeded to beat the hell out of me and forced me to smoke the p-low.

That was when I first got hooked. I started to prostitute myself so I could support my drug habits. I saw them again a few years later, they were laughing hysterically when they saw me strung out on drugs.

-K

From The Beat: We are so sorry you had to live through this K. Hopefully now you can get the support and help you need to find another way to live where you can take care of yourself, and find people you can trust and rely on to have your best interests in mind, as opposed to using you.

Passion Without Acknowledgment

Day one hundred and fifty, close my eyes and all I see is money a craving for the old man Hamilton but if only you could see.

Money's like a devil that lives inside of me.

It seems like he'd do anything just so the beast inside of me could eat,

but then I sit and think what if I truly close my eyes.

So I took a real try a blood colored tear came out my eye.

I got off my bed and got to my knees then prayed to the man above,

that I could see my dad again and give him a peaceful hug,

Until that time comes I'm on the streets thuggin' it out, until I'm back in the cell hollering a shout out to the man that wont tell.

The passion with no acknowledgement keeps me very blind.

But when that day comes to me that maybe it would be my time.

-Lo

From The Beat: Let's say you have a beast inside of you hungry for money, and another hungry for your Dad and peace. Which will you feed Lo? It is through your actions the "man above" can communicate with you, through your actions and how you feel about them. Don't give up! You have a choice here, but it does take, in your words "a real try."

Stay Open

When I first started to come to jail I never looked with open eyes. I always just cared about myself and never looked to who I was hurting. When I did open my eyes I seen how much pain and misery I caused my family. What's closed eyes in the first place? It was drugs, alcohol, and anger. If I was to never come to jail I would've found out how to open my eyes, so this place isn't half as bad as people say it is. My eyes were closed for a long time and every since I opened them I see the world and life in a different perspective. I am able to learn and listen to people now. Every day I sit in here my eyes get wider and wider. My eyes will always stay open.

-Puppy Chow

From The Beat: How did you find out how to open them? Is this something that is a one time realization or something you have to practice like a musical instrument or a sport? What do you do to deal with your anger now?

Inhale, Exhale

You are the reason for every breath that I take.
Sometimes I sit back and thank god cause in you he made
no mistakes.

Some girls are fake, but you remain true.
The lady of my life, with more flavor den Mountain Dew.
Only feelings are true. Please don't use me as a boy toy.
Alexis, Alexis or can I call you Almond Joy?
You're like the early morning butter that I spread along
my toast
soft around the edges, but creamier than most.
Yes I am only human, but I devote my life to you,
no other woman could fill your shoes.
That's why it's you I want to say "I do."

-Mookie

From The Beat: Nice writing Mookie, clearly you have some skills. We're wondering what all you need to get together to enjoy this feast? What work do you need to do with yourself to become the person that would be good for this woman to say "I do" to? In other words, the candy's sweet, but what's up with YOU?

The Ones Who Cares

The last hug I had was from my mother. The occasion
was extremely sad, it was a hug parting by when the judge
sentenced me six months.

My mother shed a lot of tears, but I tried to stay strong
for her sake. I was feeling sorry for all the things I did
wrong that hurt my mom.

I was thinking of how I can show her my heart is
changing, and how I'm going to do right. She was probably
just feeling hurt. It was at visiting and it was the day after
my sentencing.

-Jonathen

From The Beat: Have you come up with any ideas about how you can show her your "heart is changing"? We don't like to hurt our mothers because they love us and seem to keep the faith in our potential no matter what. What is "doing right" in your life?

Frosting

Roses aren't always red
Violets aren't always blue
But the love I have for you remains faithful and always
true.
I don't need nobody else, for you I'll leave my whole
crew,
that's why I do the things I do and say the things I say to
you.
I don't want you to be my chick I just want you to be my
boo.
You the only girl in my life, I cupcake on the phone with
you till 2:00.

-Mookie

From The Beat: We like how you switched up the original "Roses..." This all sounds pretty happening, so what if she says yeah, leave that crew cause I want to be with you? Would you?

Settling In

My last real hug was from my mom. When we weren't
arguing or mad at each other, everything was good. We
understood everything we were struggling about. We
went through hard times and a rough obstacle. But now
everything's better, forgiveness is settling in and taking
place in both our hearts.

-Young Happy

From The Beat: You sound like you have a good relationship with your Mom. Take care of it. It's cool about the forgiveness "settling in," you can both move on and live your lives, no forgetting but letting go of the feelings that bind you.

Who Believes in You?

Now that's a good question. Who believes in me...I'm not
sure. I mean, I know my homeboys trust me and that they
got my back just like I got theirs, but ionno if they believe
in me. I hope they do.

Same with staff and teachers. They tell me I could do
better, but in reality do they believe in me too? Do they
really care? I don't think so. And I only say that 'cause
ain't nothing changing my lifestyle. I could get a job, have
a family, live in a nice neighborhood, but can't nothing
change who I am, what I do, and who I roll with.

But one thing I know for sure, is that my parents will
always believe in me as well as "some" of my homeboys,
which is only a handful of ninjas. I got much love and
respect for that handful. But I know I could do better and
I intend to, but I ain't ever putting my past aside.

-LOS

From The Beat: We know that nothing can change who you are, what you do, or who you roll with—except you. If you hope that others believe in your potential, you must believe you have it right? And hope that they see it too? It sounds impossible to do better, and you say you intend to, with the same lifestyle. Why are you hanging on so tight to something that in the end keeps you from what you are capable of? It doesn't matter if we fail, but it does matter if we don't try.

IF

The sun was to fall and the star was to lose its shine
I would not be upset as long as you're by my side.
Through the good and the bad you the best thing I ever
had.
So aint nothing stopping me from getting back tight with
you
'cause deep down you will always be my boo.
Aint nothing in this world I wouldn't do for you
girl we belong together forever in this world.
I always wanna hold you in my arms
because to me you're my good luck charm.
Thoughts of you are like the fourth of July.
I see a lot of fireworks with brightness in my eyes.
Every time you're next to me
your passion takes me to ecstasy.
All these feelings are real and it gets me full like a meal.
So know that you're my super star, deep in my heart you
truly are.

-Mooke Da Beast

From The Beat: All this love pouring out yet you are not now "tight" with her? What happened? Take a good look at yourself, kindly, and check out what you're offering. It takes more than love, but the love can motivate you to be responsible, accountable, and walk what you talk.

Back Together

Whenever my eyes are closed it brings me to a state of mind
where I don't have to think about anything. Sometimes I
have to other wise I'll lose control of myself.

When you're in the hall all you want to do is sleep.
For some reason it's the only thing that seems to lose
time or to get your self back together.

Whenever I close my eyes it's because someone or
something is on my mind that I cant get rid of. For some
people it's to not look at the reality of a situation. Drugs
is what seems to be the solution. Still I know it's that I
try to stay on the right track, with or without my eyes
closed.

-Boots

From The Beat: Sleep is a really healing thing, and as you say, not always an escape from the reality of life. Keep putting those days together on the right track, it gets easier.

God Believes In You!

Who is there to help you when no one else is "God"
Who is worried about you when no one else is "God."
Who cries for you when you hurt and know one cares?
"God"

Whether you realize it or not, God is always there,
all you have to do is reach for him.

He wants you, you just have to want him
so get a bible and learn

Basic
Instruction
Before
Leaving
Earth

-Ernest

From The Beat: We're glad you are not alone Ernest! We hope you reach and pray and rest in this knowing, finding also faith in yourself.

No Hesitation

The last person I hugged was my mom at visiting, I was feeling bad 'cause I couldn't walk out that door with her.

There were smiles but those were just to cover up the sadness of not being able to go home, I could tell that my mom meant for the hug to show her love because she didn't hesitate at all to hug me.

-Skid

From The Beat: Sometimes Moms get it right. We hope you'll be able to repair the mistakes you've made, so you can live free and close to her. It sounds like she wants her love for you to support you while you're there. Put your life together, be the son she knows is there.

I Hate It In Here

The reason why I do not want to be in here is because I don't like to have people tell me when I can eat, sleep, shower etc. I don't like the fact that I'm wearing the same underwear which the person next to me probably wore a couple days ago. I hate taking a four minute shower especially when the water is cold. I hate it when I have to see my moms through glass. An hour of visiting is not enough time with my moms. I can't see my brothers or my sisters, my nieces and nephews. Sometimes I get lonely.

-Droopy

From The Beat: Don't forget your experience and don't return to it! Be loyal to your family, to those who really love you.

A New Goal

Hello Beat Within my nick name is Spanky and I'm gonna write about the last hug I had with my girlfriend.

I am currently in Solano county JDF and I've been here for two months. I got a furlough for my little brother's b-day party for 12 hours W

When I had to come back my girlfriend was the last person to hug me. It was a very sad hug. I hated having to tell her good bye. There was crying involved because it will be awhile before I get to see her again and we are getting married next year.

It is so hard to see her cry and miss me the way she does. I hate myself for putting her through that, and I think just that last hug opened up my eyes to a lot of different things with a new goal--to try to be good not just for me but for her. It kills me when I see the one I love sit there and cry for some of my bad mistakes.

-Spanky

From The Beat: I think she'd really appreciate the thought you've given to her feelings in addition to your own. You can do anything you are determined to do, and it sounds like you have people who need you.

Let N It Flow

Freedom taken away Miss my birthday in may
Still a price to pay Each and everyday
Al I do is pray God I don't wanna stay t
Tryna find some way Not hearing what they say
They treat me like a robot Expecting me not to stop
And if I do, I get my stop dropped Hearing them yell
Sound like hell I just laugh in my cell cause it
gimme another story to tell Like that breath I smell
My life not for sale I'm just in jail All along
wishin I had a bail Judge don't care Life's not fair
In his eyes I stare Seeing my life he won't spare
I said how could he dare Got me growin' out my hair
If my shoes he wear He will have no air
See how I couldn't breathe And all this misery
Along with this grieve Man I wanna leave
If I was given a chance I would have advance
But I'm stuck in here Got my heart sheddin' tears
My vision not clear Man I need a beer Holding back my
career
Couldn't dare do a year This place so severe
Don't wanna be near Man I need a cure
I betta get up out of here Fast so fast like the price
going up of gas... They act so hard Just a lil' bit
too hard I wish somebody would on the Blvd.
One thing I know fo show, Before I go, and say no moe
I'm through with crime Can't waste no moe time
Gotta grandpa in the town going blind Not tryna rhyme
That's a true line When I'm out I'ma get mine.

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: The rhythm in this piece is tense, mirroring the frustration you speak of. We hope you hate this juvi tour so much you never take this vacation again Lil' Nite. Be through with crime, be with your Grandpa, yeah.

I Will Succeed With Their Support

It seems that only a few people really believe in me. Everything I have been through those two people know about and support me in every way.

Growing up I had nobody, no family, nothing to look up to, and nothing to grasp on to. Within the past year I have met two people that showed more love than either of my parents. These two people sit and take their time with me no matter what I do or what happens.

Considering the fact that I am locked up and I don't get out until November, those two people write me and they go out of their way every day for me. When I told them my shoes were 2 sizes too big they bought me a fresh pair of Air Force Ones. Considering I rarely get new shoes, I've only worn them three times. They put money on their phone and they write me almost every day.

Those two people are my Baby Mama and her foster mom. When my girl's foster mom does what she does for me I notice that I look at her as my own mom, because my biological mom was never there for me. When they write me they explain how proud of me they are for turning myself around and doing my 5 months in juvi.

They always keep me posted on what's going on in the outs and they always express to me how much they love me and how much they care about me. I love those two people from the bottom of my heart and I know I will always succeed with their support. So people keep your heads up and stay solid!

-Sean

From The Beat: If you have people like this we guess you only need a few. What's great is that you are able to accept their care, and hopefully return it. Don't let them go!

Who Believes In You

Who believes in you when you don't believe in your self?

Who believes in someone who doesn't want help?

Who believes in some one who's lost?

Who believes is someone who paid the cost?

Who believes in you, no one at all?

Who believes in you when you start to fall?

Who believes in you when you're on drugs?

Who believes in you when you kick it with the thugs?

Who believes in you when you striff?

Who believes in someone who hugs the block?

Who believes in someone who's addicted to selling rocks?

Who believes in someone who says -- the world?

Who believes in someone who beats his girl?

Who believes in someone who carries a gun?

Who believes in someone who kills for fun?

Who believes in someone who's in jail?

Who believes in someone who kills for fun?

Who believes in someone who's in jail?

Who believes someone who wants to go to hell?

Who believes in you when you start to cry?

Who believes in someone who loves to lie?

Who believes in you when family don't?

Who believes in you when Quany won't?

Who believes in you when ya should?

Who believes in you when you stay in the hood?

-Javon

From The Beat: This is a strong poem, the repetition drills you with questions. The answer? We hope you're finding that out. We guess the only possible answer to every thing here is that you must believe in yourself-despite everything, through it all—even when you don't think anyone "should" believe in you. You know your own heart and potential. Every day is a new day. And by the way in all the years we've worked "inside" we haven't met anyone who killed for fun.

The Streets Are Grimy

Well today I'm going to talk about the grimy streets I'm from, which are the streets of Vacaville where all you see are homeboys everywhere from as young as 11 years old trying to earn a name for themselves.

All of the homies all keep it solid never faking the funk always down all real solid homies never no rats.

Well it's like this, the cops stay on the jock trying to run us off the block. Well here's a little about the streets I'm from.

-Young Goofy

From The Beat: What would it be like if the cops left you all alone? What would it be like to live there for the kids and the old folks? What if your extremely loyal homies worked together to make something positive for your community? What would it take to flip it like that? What if those who earned a name for themselves did so not by dying or going to prison but by raising everyone up a little, making life a little better—with the consistent help from their loyal homies.

I'm Tired of All This

From losing homies to hustling, and being locked up.

All have opened my eyes and made me wake up.

So many things I been through got me fed up.

A lot on my chest sometimes I wanna give up.

I heard a lot that I need to grow up.

But a lot of times I'm mad so I say shut up.

I'm tired of all this so I know I need to change up.

So when it's my time I can go up.

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: The thing is, this is your time—to live. Maybe heaven is love and hell is fear and hating. What if you lived "up" now? This is your chance to listen closely to yourself, to heal, to grow.

About Friends

I only had a few friends A lot like to pretend

See if they can win and get you to do sin

People like that I let blow in the wind

but here they come again and again I'm a grown man

Never will I give in Fake love don't send

Tryna see what I'm a lend and go where I've been

Man I'm a top ten I'm a fight to da end...

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: What are the qualities of true friends? Where do you find true friends? It can be difficult to know who to trust, and it takes time to build sincere relationships.

Who Believes

Me personally, I have a lot of people that tell me that I'm either gon' be locked up for life or dead!!

But I don't believe that...my aunty and my grandmother believe in me and believe that I'm going to be something in life. Even the counselor tells me that I'ma come back and even statistics...

But I believe in myself. I also have two loving family members who know that I'ma be something real special and I love them for all the support and love they've given me. I have some very strong supporting family even my cousin Jason has faith and believes that I'ma get off the block and be something and I respect him for that!!

-Quany

From The Beat: How would you have motivation to get up everyday and work through all we must do if you didn't believe in yourself? If you give up on yourself, or let other's frustration crush you it's like saying no to the life force. Everything is changing and growing all the time. Your cousin Jason must see your potential. Find your self, find what you are passionate about and develop it fully and you'll be proud of yourself in your family and far from that tiny block.

My Story About This Girl

Well check this out. Man I was oh the run doing the most. I was livin' the life. I was with this girl. In I fell in love with her. Not to be on no square shhh but I did.

Me and her been together for 6 months and the stuff we been through it feel like we been married for 20 years. I mean she took me in when I didn't have no where to go. And I was living with her and being with her everyday.

I mean I did do some janky things to her sometimes but I really loved this girl and I started to settle down for this girl. I used to just stay in the house with her. And I didn't even go to my hood like that I start cattin' off on my boys. And people stay speakin' on me lying to my girl about old stuff we already settled.

But look the day when I came to jail was the day my girl told her parents that she was pregnant. She was two months pregnant. And before I went to jail we was together, but we were going through problems, but we stayed strong.

But now since I came to jail my girl left me and I found out she had a miscarriage but now I'm thinking she had an abortion. And now she got a job. And I just think she's moving on, on me that's wrong, I don't think she really gon' do me like that. But I'm locked up and people getting to her head. But I don't know what to do I need the Beat to help me out. Because I need my wifey back!

-Millie Mill

From The Beat: The help we can offer is feedback about what you've written. It sounds like you feel like you need her, and you're worried she no longer needs you. It's difficult to need someone when they're locked up—she has to find a way to figure things out on her own, because you can't be there when you are locked up. You'll need to ask her the truth, when you get the chance. One huge loss we always see is that men who are locked up lose their chances to actively have relationships with the women they love, or could love.

Get Real

Laugh when nothings funny or like you got some money

Man you just a dummy sweeter than some honey
You need to listen sunny stop playing like a bunny
Talking bout nothing only got a lil' somethin
Acting like a goon but hide in your room
Talk just to talk but really never walk
Hard in a crowd but you scary like a cow
Holdin' that gun but chu usually always run
It ain't about games so you show that you a lame
Life too serious but you play continuous
People don't don't change that's why it's a shame
You need to get real and understand how I feel.

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: Now here you are blisteringly critical, and then finally you say you want to be understood. If everything you say is true, why would you care if these people understood you or not? It's easier, and less disappointing to let people get their lessons on their own—and spend your time on yourself. You can still be friends, maybe, without the criticism.

Like I'm Real

So much that I feel that cant be revealed
that's why I use to steal and pop hella pills
my brain that it kill and my heart sit still.
I need to be healed and feel like I'm real
not dead like a meal. I wanna run down a hill
and have some free will, overcame a lot
like almost being shot—it made me real hot
like hotter than a pot so many times I dropped
and ran into the cops haters tell me not
but I won't stop until I reach the top...

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: We're so glad that you are writing a lot. Maybe you can write some of the feelings, and they won't come out in ways that kill your brain or still your heart.

Closed Eyes

With closed eyes I choose to die,
with closed eyes I choose to cry,
with closed eyes I continue to buy,
with closed eyes I continue to lie,
with closed eyes I continue to say goodbye,
with closed eyes I continue to get high,
with closed eyes I ask, why?

-Quany

From The Beat: What is it you're afraid to see? Sometimes our fear is worse than the actual thing itself. Sometimes we are afraid to face ourselves, but you can do it, minute by minute, breath by breath—look at it, make decisions, and move forward with your life.

Apart Like This

The last hug I got was from my parents and I really enjoyed it because when I was on the outs I really didn't care about anything.

Now that I'm in here I realize that my parents love me and I also realized that the only thing that I have on this earth is actually my parents because they're with me every step of the way since I been in here.

I'm sorry Mom for putting you through all this. I know it hurts you a lot because we never been apart like this.

-Esdras

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes a big jolt (like jail) to recognize what we care about—and what really cares about us. Remember what you've learned when you get back out and life speeds up again, remember what you "have on this earth."

Who Believes In Me?

This person always tells me
"You can do it Poohh."

The struggles are over
it's time for you to do you.
No matter what we go through,
unconditional love is waiting for you!

Every body in your ear
telling you the negative and your worst fears.
Forget the mess that happened long ago
your getting past that so let it go.

If you didn't believe in them
then, why should you believe in me?
I'm Jamaya Monique.
Forget what people have to say
as long as I believe in me.

-Queen Pooh

From The Beat: Yes you CAN do it Poohh. (You and Obama). We're so proud that you're doing the work to let old stuff go, and aren't afraid of who you'll become when you don't have to hang on to that old mess that drags you down. Listen to whatever helps you believe in you. Keep those voices close so they can over-ride the negative and fear when they try to pop up.

Pimped By The Devil

For the last 17 years I've been working for the devil
like I was a 10 cent hoe pimped from sunrise to sunset.
He had me sin for him 24/7, steal, rob, lie to my mother.
When I worked for him I thought I had it easy
not working for anything, living the life I wanted to live
at any cost.

I followed his path, I didn't want to listen to anyone but him.

He used me in any way he could find until I got caught up
following him and wasn't able to work to my full abilities.

I realized as I started to stay away from him
and work for somebody with more power, God,
that the devil was using me.

I was used and when he was done I was let go,
but now that I have a new pimp—naw, partner,
I understand good doesn't always come easy.
I'm now working 24/7 for something good.

I no longer feel like a 10 cent hoe
but now a billion dollar King working towards something great.

-Twun-Twun

From The Beat: We're so glad you kicked the pimp to the curb. We also agree it's a partnership: infinite possibility and your intentions for your life. That's a powerful partnership. What do you intend to do with your life, now that you feel like a King?

Speedbump

The person I think believes in me the most is going to have to be my sister. Ever since I can remember, my sister has been there for me.

She has believed in me when no one else has. When I was homeless, my sister used to comfort me with food and little saying like "It's only a speed bump in the parking lot of life!!" No matter what has happened to me, or will never happen to me, my sister will be there. Thank you sis!

-Scott

From The Beat: We like that there are many different spaces to choose from, and that sometimes you need to slow down to get over something. Hmm, sounds like a cool sister. Let her help you out.

Crying

Thinking back makes me cry,
 Maybe I could have stopped it but I didn't try.
 As I laid awake at night I'd wait to hear the door open.
 I hated the feeling I always had.
 Could I have stopped it then?
 My hands were sweaty, my heart was beating so fast.
 I feel ashamed. I try to tell myself it's in the past.
 My secret driving me crazy, I never told anyone.
 I want to tell someone who won't judge me so I can be done.
 I think about it and maybe it's not a big deal,
 I don't know what to do I just want my wounds to heal.
 People have gone through a lot more than me
 maybe I'm wrong for feeling the way I do, but I just want to be free.
 You don't know how tired I am of crying.
 I want to scream.
 I'm so tired of lying under the influence that was when
 I shouldn't cry but I do even though that was back then.
 I can remember wishing and praying it would be the end
 at last.
 So many thoughts, I can't calm down, I'm thinking too fast.
 Just want to leave everything and run,
 it's over but I still haven't won.
 Numb inside so physical pain I don't feel.
 Sometimes I'd make sure I was still real.
 So what's left is not only scars you can see,
 But a scared, very confused me.

-Pebbles

From The Beat: You have great courage to confront this part of your past. You were not responsible for what happened. We hope you have found someone you can talk to by the time you see this, if not—ask. It will take time for your wounds to heal, but you can heal.



Worst Words

Imagine getting the words "You're going to get deported."
 Tell you the truth it's the worst feeling in the world.
 My heart felt like a knife went through it. I imagined
 not seeing my family again because they're sending me
 back across the border. I lived here mostly my whole life
 and I call this place home, but they're sending me back.
 When I told my moms the news she started crying.
 Since they told me this I can't eat or sleep. It's the worst
 feeling ever, but it's life.

-Esdras

From The Beat: We can't imagine being separated from our families like that. This will take tremendous courage. We hope you are able to grow in ways you never imagined when you go, and that you can one day reunite with your family.

Happy and Sad

The last hug I had was 3 weeks ago when my mom and daughter came to visit me.

We were having a good visit until staff yelled "Visits are now over." I ended my visit by telling my mom and daughter I love them and then gave them a hug.

When I gave my mom a hug I was thinking when would I see her again. But I was also happy that I got to see her. And when I gave my daughter a hug I was thinking of how big she had gotten. And if she would remember me. I thought how long would it be till I see her again. I also wondered if she even loved me.

Well, I was happy and sad at the same time as well. I was happy 'cause my daughter gave me a kiss and I was sad because they were going to Washington DC

-Smiley Baby

From The Beat: We can see the three generations you describe. Luckily you have lots of time to build a great relationship with your daughter, and spend more time with your Mom. Having kids is a challenge, and the greatest joy. You are lucky to have them both visiting you!

The First Time I Smoked Weed

It all started when I was 7 years old. I got peer pressured by the people that I always kicked it with and that was people from the block.

I always said to my mom that I will never smoke weed or drink but I just told her a lie. The first time I took that puff I started to cough my lungs out. But the other thing I smoke is meth, it was the best feeling I ever had, I was laughing and cheesing, hungry and tired on weed and meth. I was up all night and couldn't go to sleep, ride my bike at night.

I never had felt that way before and I told my uncle about it, he told me don't ever get caught cause when your mom finds out she's going to beat my ass. But I didn't care, I just kept on doing it and doing it and when I got caught, my mom got mad, she kicked me out of the house for like ten days and I kept doing it because my dad left us.

I'm sorry mom, I'm just a youngsta growing up in Vacaville where I was raised throughout my life. Well, I got to go, see ya'll next week Beat.

-Lil' Elfy

From The Beat: It sounds like you really felt it when your Dad left, and that you use the drugs to control those big feelings. You don't want to risk losing anything else. You have a long life ahead of you and you might be able to get a relationship good with your Dad again. Don't make excuses, youngstas from anywhere can make it good.

The One

Who believes in you when you told all them lies?
 I walked into the room another lie I told...
 Now I'm in my cell all alone in my corner.
 Staff comes to talk to me and tells me I would never be free
 then out of nowhere I hear I'm getting released.
 Now in my head I think I'm being teased.
 As soon as I felt freedom I brought out the old me.
 I promised myself to stay drug-free.
 I stay strapped with my bible because he's the one who believes in me.
 The one who believes in you is yourself.

-Young L

From The Beat: You're right, so please believe in yourself. You sound like you are mad at yourself for getting locked up again? Sometimes it takes more than one try to get clean. You're right to stick with who believes in you...Try to treat yourself how a really good friend would, one who truly loved you and had your best interest in mind—kindly.

En El Lugar Mas Seguro

En el lugar donde es más seguro para mí es en la casa de mi madre. Estando al lado de ella, puedo respirar mejor y descansar bien.

Al lado de ella, me siento satisfecho y orgulloso. Me siento feliz por pasar esos momentos felices.

Lo que me hace ser diferente es estar lejos de mi madre y de mi padre, mis hermanos, hermanos y familiares. Estando en este lugar donde estoy, me hace sentir más diferente mi personaje.

Me siento distinto desde que no estoy con mi familia. Ando en la calle. Me siento distinto porque no me siento seguro de la calle. Prefiero estar trabajando legal, estar en la escuela y estar saliendo adelante y ayudarle a mi familia a salir adelante acá en los Estados Unidos.

From The Beat: Deberías de pasar más tiempo con ella, con u familia lejos de malas amistades que solo te han traído a malas cosas. A nadie le gusta estar aquí. No hay ningún lugar en la calle que te puede sentir seguro. Deberías de pasar más tiempo en los lugares donde no te lleben a malas cosas.

The Safest Place

The safest place for me is my mom's house. Being in her side, I can breathe better and rest better.

By her side, I feel satisfied and proud. I feel happy to spend happy moments with her.

What makes me different is being away from my parents, brothers and family members. Being in this place makes my personality be different.

I feel different ever since I am not with my family. I spend time in the streets. I feel different because I don't feel safe being on the streets. I prefer to be working in a legal job, being in school, succeeding and helping my mother to succeed in the US.

-Dixon, San Francisco

From The Beat: You should spend more time with her, with your family member, away from bad influence that only take you back to places like this one. There isn't a safe place in the streets that make you feel safe. You should spend more time in places where are safe.

La Persona Mayor En Mi Familia

Esa persona es mi padre y el juega el mejor papel porque él nos educa, nos alimenta, nos dicen lo malo y lo bueno y que puede pasar con uno sino aprendes de tu problema.

Riesgo que le he tomado en la vida es venirme de mojado. No te imaginas cuantas cosas te arriesgas por querer llegar a USA. Algunas veces he mirado la muerte. Cuando el tren me ha tumbado, se me va la mente y solo espero la muerte.

From The Beat: Parece que tienes un buen padre, pero no le sigues los consejos. ¿A donde crees que estuvieras si le hubiera hecho caso? También se nota que has arriesgado mucho en venir acá, pero no has hecho nada? ¿Qué fue lo que pasó?

The Oldest Person In My Family

That person is my father and he plays the best role because he educate us, feeds us, tells us what's good and bad, and tells us what can happen to anyone who doesn't learn from problems.

The biggest risk I've ever took was coming here as an immigrant. You can't imagine what you risk to come here to the US. Sometimes I've seen death really close. When you are pushed away from the train, you lose your brain and you only wait for death to come.

-Colindres, San Francisco

From The Beat: It seems like you have a good father, but you are not listening to him. Where do you think you would be if you had listen to him? You also have risked so much in coming here, but you haven't gotten anything out of it? What happened?

Antes Y Despues

Cuando yo estaba en Honduras a mí me gustaba andar en la calle con mis amigos. Ellos me ofrecían cigarros, marihuana, alcohol, y lo peor de todo era robarles a los demás.

Esos son lugares donde yo no estaba seguro, pero cuando estaba con mi madre todo el día, me sentía seguro al lado de ella. Mi madre me llevaba a la iglesia y me sentía muy seguro.

Lo bueno es que cuando salía de la iglesia, e iba al lado de mi madre, respiraba un aire muy hermoso porque sabía que lo que estaba haciendo le agradaba a Dios y a mi madre. Mi madre se sentía muy orgullosa de mí, cuando le obedecía.

Aquí en los Estados Unidos, todo marchaba muy bien. Tenía un trabajo que ganaba mi dinerito, que me alcanzaba para mandarle a mi familia. Con ese trabajo, me sentía seguro. Estuve 7 meses yendo a la iglesia. No tomaba, ni hacía cosas malas y me sentía en un lugar seguro.

Cuando empecé a vender droga, todo cambio. Empecé a beber, fumar cigarros, mota. Mis verdaderos amigos me aconsejaban y me decían que dejara de fumar marihuana porque estaba muy morro. La verdad es que todo eso no es seguro.

Seguro es estar con su madre y su padre, con sus hermanos. En una iglesia aprendí de la palabra de Dios.

From The Beat: Has visto como las cosas malas y las malas influencias cambian la vida de una persona. Te has dado cuenta lo que tirastes a la basura por algo que no te iba a rendir toda una vida. Te hubieras querido con el trabajo que tenias, y ahí estuvieras mandandoles a tu familia y ayudandote a ti mismo. Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a volver a ser la persona que eras antes. No hay nada más lindo que estar fuera sin remordimiento y preocupaciones con un trabajo legal que no haga daño a nadie.

Before And Later

When I was in Honduras I like to be on the streets with my friends. They would offer me cigarettes, weed, alcohol, and the worst thing was to teach me to rob others.

Those were places I was not safe. When I was with my mother all day, I would feel safe. My mother would take me to church and it would make me safe. The good thing about getting out the church is that I would walk next to my mother, and the air I would breath was tasty because I knew what I was doing was getting God happy and my mother. My mother would feel proud of me when I would listen to her.

Here in the US, everything was going fine. I had a legal job that would get me my little money, and I would even send money to my family. With that job, I would feel safe. I went to church for 7 months. I didn't drink, I wouldn't do anything bad, and I would feel safe.

Being safe is being with your mother, father, and brothers. In a church I learned to preach the word of God.

-Freedy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Have you realize how bad things and bad influence can change the life of a person? Have you realize everything you threw away for something that will not last you for life? If you had stayed with that little job, you could have been out, helping your family out and you as well. We hope this experience help you to be back to the person you were before. There isn't such a thing than being out without remorse and worries and working in a legal job that can't hurt someone.

I had a legal job that would get me my little money, and I would even send money to my family.

Los Mejores Tiempo De Ser Un Padre

Bueno, mi padre nos enseñó algunas cosas, pero yo me considero un mal padre porque creo que mi hijo en Honduras me extraña. Buscando un mejor futuro para él, lo he hecho más difícil cuando me vine para los Estados Unidos.

Me vine pensando en él, pero creo que me perdi todo lo bonito de él cuando empecé a hablar, y cuando dió sus primeros pasos. Me siento mal que no estuviera ahí para ver todo lo bonito de mi niño.

Un saludo a todos los Catrachos.

From The Beat: La realidad es que esos son los momentos más bonitos de ser un padre. Tomastes la decision de darle lo mejor a tu hijo, pero parece que no lo hicistes bien. Si ya perdistes momentos bonitos con él, no pierdas los demás.

The Best Times Of Being A Father

Well, my father taught me some things, but I consider myself a bad father because I believe that my son is missing me in Honduras. Looking a better future for him, has made it difficult when I came to the US.

I came here thinking about him, but I think I lost the beauty of what a father should enjoy, like when my babe started to talk and gave his first steps.

I feel bad I wasn't there to see the beauty of my son.

My Greetings to all Catrachos.

-Daniel, San Francisco

From The Beat: The truth is that those are the most beautiful moments of being a father. You made a decision of giving the best to your son, but it seems like you didn't do everything right. If you already lost some beautiful moments from him, don't lose the moments that lie ahead.

Los Riesgos Que He Tenido

Hola, que ondas Catrachos. Les voy a contrar unos de los riesgos que he tenido que hacer. Unos de los riesgos que hice fue cuando me escape del programa. Me arriesgue porque ya se acercaba mi cumpleaños que es en principios de Octubre.

Lo único que más he deseado es estar con mi familia para esa fecha que es muy importante para mí. Con la ayuda de Dios y el juez, yo sé que se me va a cumplir mi mayor deseo. Bueno hay un dicho que dice, "el que no arriesga no gana". Que Dios los bendiga.

From The Beat: ¿Ganastes algo al haberte arriesgado cuando crristes? ¿Qué fue? Hay manera como arriesgar cosas para obtener algo positivo, pero lo que hicistes mas bien fue empeorar tu situación. Ahora no vas a poder estar donde quieres estar para tu cumpleaños.

The Risk I Have Had

Hi, what's up Catrachos. I'm going to share about the risk I have had to make. One of them was when I escaped from the program. I took a risk because my birthday was coming. That was in the beginning of October.

The only thing I have always wished is to be with my family in that date which is very important to me. With the help of God and the judge, I hope to make my dream come true. There is a saying that says, "the one who doesn't risk, never wins."

-Elias, San Francisco

From The Beat: Did you win something when you ran away? What? There are ways to risk things to obtain something positive, but what you did was to make your situation worse. Now, you may not be where you want to be for your birthday.

I thank God for having me, because if I was on the outs, I would probably would have been doing bad things or I would have been dead.

Siendo Padre

Para mí ser padre es una responsabilidad muy grande. Para tener hijos, hay que pensar muy bien porque he visto mucha gente que nomas hacen el daño y no piensan en que es lo que iran a sentir los que no tengas padres cuando le pregunten por su padre y le responsan que no tienen. Suena muy mal. Es bonito tener a su familia completa.

El día que me case, tengo que tener mi casa, saber que no voy a andar arquilando. Yo quiero lo mejor para mis hijos. Hagarren mi consejos compas.

From The Beat: Tienes un buen punto! Esperamos que llegues a pensar asi siempre, y te acuerdes antes de cometer ese error. Hay muchas personas que no han tenido el calor de padre y todo eso se les debe a las padres irresponsables quienes no estuvieron ahí. No repitas la misma historia.

Being A Father

For me, being a father is a huge responsibility. To have kids, you have to think about it very well because I've known guys who get girls pregnant and don't care about it, and don't care about how the babies would feel when they ask them for their fathers and respond that they don't have one. It sounds bad. It's a beautiful thing to have your whole family complete.

The day I get married, I would have to have a house first, so I don't have to rent. I want the best for my kids. Take my advice my friend.

-Tavo, San Francisco

From The Beat: You got a good point! We hope you always think about this, so you won't have to commit the same mistake. There are many people who haven't had the warmth of a father, and the reason has always been those irresponsible fathers who were not there. Just don't repeat the same story.

La Violencia

Para mí, la violencia es algo que tenemos que vivir y es algo que nos puede llevar a la muerte. Pongansen a pensar que la violencia trae a la gente a la prisión, pero hay que darle gracias a Dios porque lo tiene aquí. Si estuvieramos libres, quizás estuvieramos muertos.

Yo le doy gracias a Dios por tenerme bien, porque si estuviera afuera andaría haciendo maldades o estuviera muerto. Nadie sabe lo que puede pasar afuera.

From The Beat: ¿Estas hablando por experiencia? ¿Hay alguna forma como evitar la violencia? ¿Haz podido evitarla algún día? Entendemos que la calle es un lugar de peligro, pero también sabemos que no tienes que estar en este lugar para poder estar lejos de las manos de la violencia.

Violence

For me, violence is something we have to live and it is something that can take us to death. You should start to think that violence brings people to prison, but we have to give our thanks to God because He is keeping us here. If you were free, we would probably be dead.

I thank God for having me, because if I was on the outs, I would probably would have been doing bad things or I would have been dead. Nobody knows what can happen on the outs.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: Are you speaking from experience? Is there a way to avoid violence? Have you avoided it some days? We understand that the street is a dangerous place, but you don't have to be in this place to be away from violence.

Un Tonto O Un Padre

Para mí un padre significa mucha responsabilidad como por ejemplo darle una educación, y enseñarle la honestidad como me la enseñó mi padre. Si fuera padre, sería como mi padre que me ayuda y me quiere como soy.

Un padre no es el quien ejendra sino el quien le da cariño, apoyo, comprensión, respeto y muchas cosas más. Si yo algún día fuera padre, quisiera que mis hijos no estuvieran donde estoy. Por eso quiero salir de aquí para cambiar mi vida, para cuando tenga hijos, se sientan orgullosos de su padre como me siento yo orgulloso del mío.

Aunque esté aquí no quiere decir que mi papa no me quiso o que no me dio una educación. No fue eso. Él siempre quiso lo mejor para mí. Me dijo que siempre fuera honesto. Si me dijeran que eligiera un padre mil veces lo eligiera a él.

From The Beat: Se nota que tu padre te ha enseñado mucho. Lastimosamente no haz podido seguir sus pasos de un padre ejemplar. A veces no podemos entender porque es que nosotros no le hacemos caso a las personas que realmente desean lo mejor para nosotros. Sabes cuanto deseamos tener el tipo de padre que tú tienes. Muchos los desearan y los que no se lo merecen, los tienen.

A Punk Or A Father

For me, a father means a lot of responsibilities, like for example to provide a good education, to teach honesty like my father has done to me. If I were a father, I would be like my father who helps me accept me the way I am.

A father is not who conceives, but the one who gives caresses, support, comprehension, respect and other things. If I were a father, I would like my son never to be where I am. That's why I want to get out of here, to change my life, so when I get my kids, they can be proud of their father like I feel proud about mine.

Even if I am here, it doesn't mean that my dad didn't want me or didn't provide me education. It wasn't that. He always wanted the best for me. He always told me to be honest. If someone asked me to choose a father, I would choose him a thousand times to be it.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's noteworthy that your father has taught you so much. Sadly, you haven't followed his steps of an exemplary father. Sometimes, we can't understand why we don't listen to those who want the best for us. Do you know how much we wish to have the father you have as a father. Many would desire to have yours, and those who deserve a father like yours don't have it.

Un Lugar Donde Me Siento Seguro

Un lugar seguro es la casa de mi madre o pueden ser en otros pueblos.

Hay muchas cosas que te hacen ser diferente y hay muchas cosas que tenemos en común. Todos nos reímos a los chistosos, lloramos cuando nos sentimos tristes, son gritos los que damos cuando nos cortamos, y morimos. Creo que en este lugar todos somos iguales.

From The Beat: Así todos tenemos muchas cosas en común, pero hay que precarar no terminar en lugares como estos como otros criminales han caído.

A Place Where I Feel Safe

That place is the house of my mother or in the houses in other towns.

There are many things that make me different and many things that we have in common. We all laugh when something is funny, we all cry when we are sad, and we all yell when we get cuts and we all die. I think in this place we are all equals.

-Rony, San Francisco

From The Beat: Right, we all have many things in common, but we have to prevent ending up in here like others have. You don't belong to this place.

La Joya De Mi Vida

Mi primer joya en mi familia es mi madre. Pues de ella aprendí muchas cosas de la vida. Por ella tuve una educación. Ella fue una madre muy importante en mi vida. Fue lo mejor que Dios me dio.

Nuestra madre se preocupaba cada segundo por nosotros. Ella se sacrificaba desde que nos anda en su vientre. Cuando nacemos, nuestras madres los cuidan lo mejor que pueden. Nos dan cariños, nos dan respeto, y lo más importante es que nos dan amor.

Ahora me siento triste, muy triste porque esa joya muy importante que me enseñó una Buena educación, quien me ayudó a salir adelante, quien me dio amor, no la tengo aquí conmigo.

Ya no tengo el apoyo de ella. Estoy solo porque hace cinco meses murió en Honduras. Aunque para mí ella no siga viva, ella sigue muy pendiente de mi corazón. La amo y nunca olvidaré todo lo que aprendí de ella.

Cuando mi madre estaba viva, yo iba a la iglesia. Andaba en buenos pasos. Me aconsejaba mucho. Cuando mi madre murió, yo me deprimí mucho. Empecé a andar en malos pasos como vender drogas, tomar, fumar. Cuando ella murió desobedecí todos los consejos que ella me daba. Ya no podía escuchar su voz. Aunque yo sé que ella está muy triste por lo que hice. Amo a mi madre.

From The Beat: Sentimos muchos tu pérdida. Sabemos que es muy difícil lidiar con una pérdida así, pero creemos que no es justo que tires todo a la basura. Todos venimos para irnos algún día y es parte de la vida. Donde sea que ella esté, estamos seguros que te desea lo mejor del mundo, que debes de estar haciendo lo posible como mandarte el mensaje que sigas los consejos que ella te daba. A lo mejor está mandando el consejo a través de nuestras reencarnaciones. Vuelve a ser el mismo de antes y alejate de las cosas que te lastimen.

The Jewelry Of My Life

The first jewelry is my mother. With her, I learned a lot of things about life. Because of her, I got an education. She was a very important mother in my life. It was the best God gave me.

Our mother is the one who worries for us at every second. She has been sacrificing herself ever since she carried us in her belly. When we are born, our mothers take care of us as best they possibly can. They give us hugs, respect and what's more important is that they give.

Now I feel sad, very sad because that jewelry that provided me education, who helped me succeed, who gave me love, is no longer with me.

I no longer have her support. I am alone because she died five months ago in Honduras. Even though she is not alive, she worries about my heart. I love her and I'll never forget everything I learned from her.

When my mom was alive, I would go to church with her. I was in good roads. She would give me good advice. When my mom died, I disobeyed her advice she gave me. I couldn't hear her voice. I know she is very sad for what I've done. I love my mother.

-Marcos, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. We know that it is very sad to deal with such a loss, but we believe that it isn't ok for you to throw your life away. We are all born to leave someday, and that's part of life. Wherever she is, we are sure that she might be wishing you the best, and she might be doing whatever is possible to send you the message through something or someone else. She might be doing it through our response.

How To Love a Black Man

Ask any Sister and she'll tell you that a Black man should be strong, independent, goal-oriented, supportive, and the list goes on and on. Now, ask that same Sister what a Brother wants or deserves in return. Those answers don't flow with the same ease because, in a society that seems to always be concerned with how a man should show love or romance a Sister, few people ask how a woman should love a Black man.

So how do you love a Black man? What some Sisters fail to realize is that if a Black man is treated right, really treated right, his love knows no bounds. For when a Black man loves, more perhaps than any other race of men, his loves run deep, deeper than anything that a woman could ever imagine.

So what should a Sister do? How does she ignite that dormant fire that smolders inside most Brothers? While that is a question sociologists, psychologists, and scholars in universities and beauty shops across the country have pondered for generations, the simple answer is: Give him what he wants and needs. Be his all in all. Here are five ways to engage his body, mind, and soul:

Blow his fantasy mind. While holding his hand, looking into his eyes, cuddling him and sweet talking him is nice, sometimes what a man really wants is a passionate woman able to counter his active hormones with her own brand of fiery passion. In short, one way to put it, a Brother wants mind-blowing, body-numbing sex. Make no mistake, most times a man wants a woman to be a lady, but sometimes he wants her to say and do things that he never thought she would do, things that he didn't know were humanly possible. There's been a lot of talk recently in polls and surveys about women who want more variety in sex.

And the answer to all the talk is to stop talking and do it! Men are looking for a thrill. He puts more in the physical. He has sexual desires that he wants satisfied. He wants a woman to be there when he needs her. When it comes to sex, what many Brothers really want is a woman with no pretenses, no inhibitions. He wants someone with nothing to hold back and nothing to hide, a woman who can put on the ultimate show and make home the ultimate Fantasy Island, a place too good to leave.

That means being versatile, teasing him up one night, taking it to him strong the next. Because whether a Brother admits it or not, when it comes to his sexual satisfaction, he wants to be taken to school again and again and again. The problem here, and elsewhere, is that the Brother doesn't want what he says he wants or what he fantasizes about wanting. No matter what he says, he's not going to marry a call girl or a party girl. What he wants, no matter what he says, is a woman who is a whole woman, that is to say, a woman who is at the top of her game, whether it's running an office, cooking greens, mothering children, or taking care of a real man.

Listen to him and inspire his goals. A man wants a woman's undivided attention. He wants a woman who can take away all of the distractions and communicate, really communicate, with him. He wants a woman who won't cut him off, talk over him, finish his sentences for him. He wants a woman who can sit down next to him and listen without always talking. Communication is key to a lasting relationship. Unfortunately, many people believe that a relationship is all about finding someone to give you what you want.

A relationship is about an exchange of ideas and information, and the exchange of bits and pieces of each individual to form a sense of oneness. Every man longs to hold a woman in his arms as she gazes up at him. Whether it's for his height, money, position, street knowledge, or book smarts, every man wants to be looked up to by his woman who understands that he is doing the best that he can with the cards he was dealt. He

If you've been in tune with pages of our publication for the past several months, then you know Shawn Montgomery. Shawn writes to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. He always comes with informative, straightforward talk touching on various topics. Your going to recognize the smart OG he is from his writing. He's been down twenty plus years, but you wouldn't be able to tell by the positive messages he puts out there. (On the same hand, The Beat would love to read a piece by a Black Woman on the topic, "How To Love A Black Woman," to complement his take on "How To Love A Black Man".) So please kick back, and enjoy some of Shawn's pieces.

wants her to inspire him

to greatness, not to beat him down because he hasn't attained that greatness yet.

The Black man suffers a double bind because he is oppressed by society but is told to be the leader of his family. He wants to lead and to be treated like a leader. He wants his woman to finally understand that whatever happens to him has a direct effect on her. We need patriarchs just as much as we need matriarchs. Black men need their women to show them real love by helping them, freeing them from society's bondage. Love comes from a mutual respect, not by cuddling all the time.

Trust, don't nag him. If a lady trusts her man, really trusts him, he will hold her trust sacred. Trust him to be a leader. Trust him to be a protector. Trust him to be a provider. Trust him to be faithful. Trust that he would never lead you wrong. A man wants a woman who is not just a fair-weather mate, but one who can stand the rain. He wants a woman who will stand by him no matter what happens.

Many women who are only asking men to carry their fair share of responsibilities are perceived by some men to be nags. Nagging may be simply asking for legitimate rights in a relationship. But there are women who will press issues to get the kind of answers that they are looking for. A man needs his space. Sometimes that space might be hanging out with the fellows, playing cards or watching the football game. But a woman needs here space, too.

Tease him, then please him. Nothing turns on a man more than a woman who's a good tease. Men like inconspicuous displays of affection from a woman who is game for a good chase. He wants his woman to not be afraid to leave a romantic note, give him a slight touch, give him that certain look. Men love women who can work their sexual appeal one minute and have intelligent conversations with them the next. A woman who can talk about business, sports, politics, and the like, while still keeping her femininity in tact, will engage a man's mind and, in turn, his body and soul. But here and others, men and women warn, don't use sex as a weapon. Don't use sex as a bargaining tool to get something that you want. It creates resentment.

Show him, don't just tell him, how much he is loved. Truth be told, a man doesn't care how many times you tell him that you love him; he would rather you show him. While men tend to keep their emotions under wraps more than women, their feelings inside are much the same. It's all about making a man feel wanted, masculine, respected by a woman who is considerate, passionate, and affectionate. Men also love it when his lady has no problem doing something for him.

He loves it when she greets him at the door when he comes home. Do the little things like starting the coffee in the morning, offering to tape a game he might miss, allowing him the ability to take charge. Nothing turns a man on more than knowing that he is with a faithful, loyal woman, one who can be in a room with fifty other men and still focus her attention on him.

A man loves a woman who shows real interest in his life. A woman goes out of her way to make him feel loved. What does he want? It's simple. He wants to be the center of your attention and the co-star of a long-running show.

It Shows On Your Face

You don't have to tell
 How you live each day
 You don't have to say
 Whether you work or you play
 A tried true barometer
 Serves in its place
 However you live
 It will show on your face
 The hate, the deceit
 You may bear in your heart
 Will not stay inside
 Where it first got its start
 For the skin and the blood
 Are a thin veil of lace
 What you wear in your heart
 You will wear on your face
 If your life is unselfish
 If for others you live
 For not what you get but
 How much you give
 If you live close to God
 In His infinite grace
 You don't have to tell it
 It shows on your face.

A President For All People

I don't have to tell you that America is about to elect a president for the next four years, and possibly the next eight years. We don't want to elect a president for African Americans. We don't want to elect a president for white people. We don't want to elect a president for Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans. We don't need a president for poor people, rich people or those in between. For sure we don't need a president for any religious group of preference. What we need is a president for all people, regardless of age, sex, color, ethnicity, social or economic status. We need to elect a president who will do what is right for all people. We need to elect a president who believes in the constitutional promise of providing for the common good of all citizens.

For sure America needs a different kind of politics that unites us and not divides us. We need a new kind of politics that doesn't mention African Americans, white people, Hispanics, class of people or religion. These are all items, names or brands that tend to divide us. That doesn't mean we have to lose our racial or religious pride. Nor does it mean that we need to lose our individuality. It does mean that we must be Americans first.

Would we as African Americans want a president that promised to be the president for white people only? Imagine that you were white or Hispanic or an Asian citizen of this country; would you want a president that promises to represent Black people only? Of course not! In my mind, a president that does what is right for all people is speaking to all Americans. It means taking care of the healthy but poor by providing them with jobs. It means taxing those who can pay the taxes. It means keeping all of America and Americans safe. It means providing for the education of every child, healthcare for all, and emphasis on all Americans, speaking to every American.

This is how a presidential candidate should campaign and we need him to mean what he says. We need a president for all Americans. Don't just talk about being that; be that.

The Right to Bear Arms

Last month, the United States Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that individuals have the constitutional right to have guns in their homes for self defense. Chief Justice John Roberts, Justices Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alioto supported Justice Scalia. Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen Breyer cast dissenting votes. The ruling clarifies gun restriction laws passed in all 50 states and U.S. territories. However, the law does not override all existing gun control laws.

A landmark ruling, it overturned the District of Colombia ban on handguns, which is the strictest in the country. Justice Scalia wrote that the court was aware of the problem of handgun violence and that the court took the issue seriously. However, he wrote, "The enshrinement of constitutional rights necessarily takes certain policy choices off the table. It is not the role of this court to pronounce the Second Amendment extinct."

Justice Stevens countered in his belief that the majority opinion was based on a "strained and unpersuasive reading" of the Second Amendment. He contends in his written opinion, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

When the Second Amendment was written, it may have spoken of the militia, but it was a different time in history. There was no organized military as we know it today. Additionally, when called to combat, men brought whatever weapons they had in their possession. There was no consistency in the type of weapon brought because they were not government issued nor regulated handguns.

Additionally, during that era, the country was still in the process of establishing itself. Owning guns was not a luxury. People depended on their guns to not only protect themselves and their families but to provide food as well. The ruling must not be interpreted to eliminate existing laws. Some laws may need to be redefined to comply with the ruling but several laws pertaining to convicted felons possessing guns or the need of permits and registration still stand.

History of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers

1976-1978: The Buccaneers joined the NFL as members of the AFC West in 1976. The following year, they were moved to the NFC Central while the other 1976 expansion team, the Seattle Seahawks, switched conferences with Tampa Bay and joined the AFC West. This realignment was dictated by the league as part of the 1976 expansion plan so that both teams could play each other twice and every other NFL franchise once during their first two seasons.

The Tampa Bay expansion franchise was originally awarded to Tom McCloskey, a construction company owner from Philadelphia. It soon became apparent that McCloskey had financial problems, so the NFL found a replacement in Hugh Culverhouse, a wealthy tax attorney from Jacksonville well known in NFL circles for brokering an unprecedented franchise swap between the Baltimore Colts and Los Angeles Rams. A name-the-team contest resulted in the nickname "Buccaneers," in honor of the yearly Gasparilla Pirate Festival in Tampa. The team's first home was Tampa Stadium, which had recently been expanded to seat just over 72,000 fans. Steve Spurrier was the quarterback for Tampa Bay during the expansion season.

Tampa Bay started the first two seasons winless with an overall 0-26 record before finally winning its first game in 1977 on the road against the New Orleans Saints. Saints' head coach Hank Stram was fired after losing to the Buccaneers, but Tampa Bay went out the next week and won their first game over the St. Louis Cardinals in the 1977 season finale.

1979-1982:

The Bucs' situation improved rapidly in 1979. With the maturation of quarterback Doug Williams, the first 1000-yard rushing season from running back Ricky Bell, and a smothering, league-leading defense led by the future NFL Hall of Famer Lee Roy Selmon, the Bucs kicked off the season with five consecutive victories, a stunning performance that landed them on the cover of Sports Illustrated.

With four games left in the season, the Bucs needed to win only one of them to make the play-offs. In the first, STP was put all over the goal posts in Tampa to prevent the goal posts from being ripped down in the event of a celebration. Four blocked kicks later, the Bucs wasted the oily substance, falling to the Minnesota Vikings 23-22. STP was wasted again the following week as the Bucs were shut out 14-0 by the Chicago Bears, and in OJ Simpson's final home game in San Francisco, Tampa lost its third straight attempt to clinch a division title against a 49ers team which came in with a 1-13 record. Clinch they did, however, in their final contest at home against the Kansas City Chiefs, which was played in the worst downpour in Bucs history. Finishing with a 10-6 record, the Bucs had their first winning season in franchise history, and also won the Central Division in a tiebreaker over the Chicago Bears.

In an upset, the Bucs defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 24-17 in the divisional round of the playoffs. Because the Los Angeles Rams defeated the Dallas Cowboys in the other NFC playoff game, the Bucs hosted the NFC Championship Game the following week in Tampa. The Bucs lost to the Rams 9-0, thanks to great defense by the Rams. In their fourth season, the Bucs seemed on the verge of fulfilling McKay's five-year plan.

The Bucs made the playoffs again by winning their division in the 1981 season and entering the first round during the strike-shortened 1982 season. The 1981 season came down to a thrilling final game at Detroit. The winner would take the Central Division crown and the loser would miss the playoffs. The Lions had not lost at home all season. Although the Bucs trailed early, an 84-yard touchdown bomb from QB Williams to WR Kevin House and a fumble recovery for a touchdown by LB David Logan sealed the shocking win for the Bucs.

The Dallas Cowboys rewarded the Bucs' efforts with a 38-0 blowout in the divisional round of the playoffs. The 1982 season started just as poorly for the Bucs as they went 0-3 before a players' strike shut down the NFL for seven weeks. When the league resumed play, the Bucs were nicknamed the "Cardiac Kids" for winning five of their next six games, all in the final moments to go 5-4 and qualify for the expanded playoff state. In the first round, the Bucs once again faced the Cowboys at home in Dallas, but the Bucs put up a much better fight, leading the game at the half. Tampa Bay lost 30-17.

1982 would be the last winning regular season under Culverhouse's ownership. Prior to the 1983 season, the Bucs lost Doug Williams to the United States Football League (USFL) and immediately bottomed out at 2-14, starting a string of 14 consecutive losing seasons (the first 13 of which they suffered at least 10 losses). Included in their misery was the drafting of Heisman Trophy winner Bo Jackson with the first pick in the 1986 draft. Jackson never suited up for the Bucs, instead, deciding to play baseball for Kansas City Royals. Jackson would later return for parts of football season with the Los Angeles Raiders.

To Be Continued...

You Tell on Yourself

You tell on yourself by the friends you seek
 By the very manner in which you speak
 By the way you employ your leisure time
 By the use you make of dollar and dime

You tell what you are by the things you wear
 By the spirit in which your burdens bear
 By the kind of things at which you laugh
 By the records you play on the phonograph

You tell what you are by the way you walk
 By the things of which you delight to talk
 By the manner in which you bear defeat
 By so simple a thing as how you eat

By the books you choose from the well-filled shelf
 In these ways and more, you tell on yourself
 So there's really no particle of sense
 In an effort to keep up false pretense.

Gossip

"Baby, let me tell you...", "Hey, man, you heard about..." or "Guess what..." usually precedes gossip. Gossip has become a powerful tool that unfortunately is a form of communication.

Gossip can be painful. It can spread rumors that aren't true and hurt a family suffering a loss or trying to recover from a tragedy.

Gossip can also be a great marketing tool. Through gossip, you learn what people want, what they don't want, and what's really bothering them. The problem with gossip is you don't know where to separate truth from fiction. You don't know what's true and what's just plain gossip.

In investigating crime reports, a person can be the victim of a single gunshot wound, but gossip will have them shot several times, beaten, and even tortured. Gossip has been around too long for it to disappear. It has been the source of information for people in the community, and even law enforcement personnel are learning something.

One false perception is that women gossip more than men. Obviously, the person who said this has never spent any time in prison or in a barbershop. Men gossip about different things than women, but it's gossip just the same.

There's no way to stop this medium of communication and there's no way to control it. It starts out as a flicker and quickly turns into an inferno. To the people who thrive off gossip, I tell them to get a life and seek the truth for a change. To the people who've been hurt by gossip, I want them to be strong and not allow gossip to control their lives. Be more thick-skinned and less gullible. Train your emotions to not get out of control because of what someone has said.

Remember, gossip can work both ways. It can be a psychological tool to get to the truth. Temper what you accept as truth and consider the source. That way, gossip will be exactly what it's always been, and that's a collection of information that may or may not be true, and the reflection of a person seeking attention.

Just Because

Just because I've been taken out of the real word
Doesn't mean I can't be somebody
Just because I can't step out
Doesn't mean I have to forget the people I love
And forget about the possibility to have a family of my own
Just because of stupid mistakes one makes
Doesn't mean I have to give up all my good ideas
Doesn't mean I should kill myself
Just because I was a so-called "danger to society"
Doesn't mean I haven't changed
Doesn't mean I can't make up for my mistakes
But one thing for sure
Is that I am going to make it out there
Start my life all over again
And show the world
That the person the condemned
Isn't who they thought he was.

-Paulo

We are proud to present the next few writers as young talented men from Correctional Facilities Washington D.C. The Beat now travels all the way to Washington D.C. to conduct workshops. Every year, more than 60 juveniles are charged and incarcerated as adults at the DC jail. Many of them have never read a book or written a poem before being arrested. Since November 2002, Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop has been introducing youths at the DC jail to the life-changing power of books and creative writing. So please give these brilliant young minds a read.

13 Years Old

Damn, I am locked up for all my childhood
I am small and a little chubby
I am wearing different color shirts
And tennis shoes
I am all-alone
It is all year round
I treasure my family and my life
I feel lonely
I am 13 years old

-Sean

People Think I'm...

People think I'm the devil
When I'm really an angel of God
People think I'm a gangster
Just because I look so hard
People think I'm a bastard
Just because my father wasn't there
People think I'm crazy
Because I act like I don't really care
People think I'm a loser
When really I strive for success
But I act this way so you can know
I ain't the one to test!

-T.J



Ghost Dad

Here one day and gone the next
Where did he go, my little voice vexed
Growing up without a dad, that I did
So I grew up a fatherless kid
Every three years he would call me
And every three years he told the same lie to me
He said he was going to pick me up
But he never did, so I guess he ain't give a care
Only time he really called was when he got locked up
I was always happy to talk to him, it felt like good luck
But when he finally came to see me
I thought I was dreaming
Wow! I finally saw my dad
My feelings are no longer bad
A spitting image of him, that's what I looked like
When I seen his face, I couldn't believe my sight
As soon as I closed my eyes, he was gone from under the light
I could no longer see him; I tried with all my might
Here one minute and gone the next
Where did he go, my little voice vexed
My dad, he left me, he left me to be alone
So I said forget him, I'll learn how to be grown on my own.

-Juan

G.A.N.G.

4 letters is the reason
This generation kills and dies
4 letters is the reason
Young men and women lost their lives
4 letters is the reason
There are fools running around with guns
Taking people's lives
There shouldn't be any reason to kill or die
4 letters is the reason
Why many of us are now locked down
Wasting our lives behind these bars
4 letters is the reason
Why some of us are never gonna see the
Street or the sunlight
4 letters is the reason
Our mothers cry
Because we are either locked down
In a hospital
Or a graveyard

-Pablo

Life

They say you should not ask the Lord any questions
Well, I have many
Will that stop me from getting my blessing?
I can start with the sick and end with the ones who will
soon be resting
Yeah, I feel angry as I write this poem
So I guess you could say I am confessing
(Life) they say do right or spend the afterlife in 1000
degrees Fahrenheit
Well, I chose the dice, a.k.a. "The Game of Life"
I grew up in the light, ended up in the night
Got taught to wear the hoody strings pulled tight
(Life) why live when everybody is still stuck on black and
white?
All I know is, success is the reason I choose to fight
-Demetrius B.

The Definition of Being a Man

A man does not need to look over his back
Each time he walks down the street
A man puts family first and then himself
A man knows what comes first from his needs and
wants
He gets them the responsible way
But in today's youths' eyes
If you don't have money, expensive cars and jewelry
Then you're not a man
I have become a man in my own eyes
But if it means living up to their expectations to be a
man
I think I will just stay a child

-Jose

Being Maurice

Being Maurice means peace!
Peace means never envying on people you may see
Tryin' to stay out of trouble and stay out of beefs
Being Maurice
I like to chill and have so much fun
In the summer I be on the run
So when you see me, you betta believe
I have somewhere fun to be
Being Maurice

-Maurice

Hear Us Out

Hear Us Out
Hear us out for a change
Instead of seeing orange and walking away
Sit down with us and open your heart
Just because we're inmates, we still have hearts
We like to express our feelings
And have our jokes laughed at
We like to be heard and not just seem as a stat
Please can somebody just hear us out?
I think someone will hear us
I'll never have doubts!

-Michael F.

What Makes Criminals...Criminals?

Their Thinking

You ever wonder what makes a criminal different from
the rest of the people in society? What makes a criminal
tick? I mean, when you look at your average miscreant at
the core, he or she looks just like the rest of us. Thankfully
we've matured enough as a society to realize that those old,
absurd stereotypes, beady eyes, tattoos, or various shades
of pigmentation, are not criminal markers.

We now judge criminals based on their actions and
their modus operandi. Criminals are so arrogant they
believe they can get away without ever getting caught. And
just about all criminals are sociopaths, people who fit right
in but at the core have no conscience or feeling toward the
sufferings they inflict on others.

Criminals of every ilk, such as celebrities, outlaw
singers, actors and athletes, commit a variety of crimes
from murder to selling drugs to animal cruelty; they show
no regard for the law. Rogue CEOs, politicians and police
officers who make victims out of the least among us play
shrewd numbers with the books, usurp public funds for
personal use, and rob low income residents while planting
contraband on them. Yet the one driving force among this
infamous minority in society is their thinking. It's not race,
genes, cranium size (debunked phrenology) or any of that
other nonsense we've heard in the past.

Like me, there are a lot of people in prison who now get

Dortel Williams writes to us from a correctional facility in Lancaster,
Ca. A fine writer, he brings a lot of insight to his political views and
opinions that he delivers. He always gives advice so anyone can take
it. Anyone who reads his writing, whether you're in jail or not, can
really feel what he's saying. He tackles various issues and problems that
affect everyone in the community. 'Cause even though some of y'all are
locked up, you still have the power to make a difference. So kick back,
and indulge yourself on Dortel's potent pieces.

it. Years, and in some cases decades, was enough to bring
about the penitence that penitentiaries were designed by
the Quakers to bring about. Others need a little more of a
nudge. And still, others need outright cognitive realignment.
Yet for all, a little rehabilitation can do no harm.

Some victim orientation, life skills and social
etiquette would not only counter the pervasive idleness
but instill some new and appropriate values. Introduction
"corrections" via simple videos could do the trick, and would
add some productivity with little or no cost to taxpayers. A
higher learning and self-improvement instruction could do
wonders, not only for them but public safety as well.

But I suppose we must first change the mindset of
society. After all, we can't change the criminal mind until
society understands that thirty years of the warehouse-
punishment model has failed.

If we can change the thinking of society and their
approach to "corrections," then, no doubt, there is hope for
rehabilitating and changing the thinking of the offender.

Bottom line, it's all in the thinking.

May 4, 2008:

I suppose a good place to start a diary, or any relationship for that matter, is to introduce myself. I am a prisoner, a father, a friend. I am a dreamer, a fighter and survivor. I am a victim, a lover and protector; and yet so much more--just like anyone else. I suspect that each of these facets will at some point surface as I share.

I have been imprisoned for the last eighteen consecutive years, having been convicted of lying in wait (a capital crime, and a very vague one at that) in the murder of my late and beloved wife, who was a tender twenty-one years then. I was a naive twenty-three. It gets much sadder. My wife, who I'll call Sweet Face, was pregnant with our second child. The police said it would have been a boy. Our daughter, Sweet B, was eighteen months at the time.

I was originally charged with murder for financial gain because we had a \$100,000 insurance policy on each of us. We were talked into buying the policy by a coworker at the time who sold insurance on the side. It was his testimony during trial that earned me an acquittal on that charge.

During trial the prosecutor charged me with robbery because one of the two culprits took my wife's purse. This infuriated the judge. He said the prosecutor needed to make up his mind which theory it was going with and be consistent with it. Oh, I didn't tell you that it was a completely circumstantial trial based on a lot of "theories," conjecture and the like.

Anyway, after five weeks of deliberations the jury settled on the theory that it was a murder-for-hire plot despite no connection to me and the robbers. Or the fact that there was evidence that it was really a drug deal that had soured on the spot. (There was actually more evidence in the O.J. Simpson and Robert Blake trials, but, of course, I had a lot less money for a defense. Actually, I had no money for a defense. It's the same ole story of the haves and the have nots.) So here I am with life without the possibility of parole. (The jury also had the option of the death penalty, but they only deliberated for three hours before declining.)

In many ways this curse has been a blessing. I found myself. I see the true nature of humans, societies and politics. I have also learned a great deal about myself, all of which I am eager to share as we get closer. Well, that's it for now. I'll try to share a little more tomorrow.

May 4, 2008:

Today was a somber and shocking day. One of my neighbors attempted to do himself in. While his cell partner was on a visit Frank (not his real name) cut his neck and slashed his left arm and then lay there to bleed out. Poor Ed (not his real name either).

When he returned from his visit he walks up to the door to enter and walks into the surrealism of a real live horror scene. Blood is splattered on the back wall, making for an unsightly display of crimson and cream white. The dull gray concrete floor now shines with thick puddles of life spilled about and the entire spectacle could only be described in whole as ghastly. When they gurneyed Frank out he was pallid and dazed. We were shocked.

He is just one of many who have either tried or successfully killed themselves in this hellhole of hopelessness. And while many think he is weak (I think he just hit a wall), I can relate because I was tempted with the same fate after the murder of my wife. It was the love of my baby who kept me from utterly crashing. I owe her my life in so many ways.

It's Time At-Risk Kids Take a Stand!

It baffles me. Adults loosely call them "at-risk kids," yet they don't seem to stop and think what that really signifies. I mean, if they know these kids are at risk, then they should fix the circumstances that put them at risk, right?

They should set policies to balance the circumstances that put kids in a bad way. Many kids are at risk because their parents are on drugs, or there's only one struggling parent. One or both parents may be in prison, though they're nonviolent. Others are at risk simply because they're poor, their schools are poor and their neighborhoods are poor. That is sad in a country as rich as America. Still others are at risk because guns and drugs are so readily available. Both are cheap as dirt!

Too many adults only make noise after a child has been victimized by these preventable ills, especially guns. There are just too many around for a civilized society, with virtually no controls or real accountability. With that said, it seems that adults are not so sharp after all. I think kids are not only smart but can be good writers, too. Perhaps it's time at-risk kids start writing politicians and corporations themselves and describe the conditions that hurt them, offering solutions as well. I have a lot of faith in kids and I think it's time they be encouraged to have faith in themselves. I think it's time at-risk kids take a stand.

Talent Within

After reading through the latest pages of The Beat Within and taking in all the colorful thoughts, ideas and exhilarating free verse by fellow incarcerated writers, I feel uplifted, encouraged and energized. As always, I'm impressed with the richness of imagination, opinion and sharing. Yeah, in spite of the inhumane treatment we're sometimes subjected to, we are human. We are what we think; and these collections of missives, prose and commentaries reflect the immeasurable treasure within every one of us.

Yet each one of us is a brilliant, illuminating light encapsulated within a thick, obscure shell of darkness; hidden from the world about. We are characterized by society only for what we've done (or have been accused of), and not for what we are or could be.

Still, every letter in each of the words we compose reveals the flagrant waste these massive bastions for the poor really are. Yet it is primarily through writing, using the pen as a weapon to dispel the political and social myths launched against us, that we can prove our humanity, expose our worth and defy society's "gang mentality" of revenge, as opposed to redemption and rehabilitation.

I'm excited about our potential and the possibilities for change we can all make right here, right now, where we are. Not only should we encourage others to submit to The Beat Within, but we should also submit to the mainstream. It's a tough process to get newspapers and magazines to publish our work, but the rewards are worth the strain and learning the format and guidelines (by writing them and studying their format) will yield an endless harvest.

May 5, 2008:

Today I feel a little overwhelmed. My friends from the Office of Restorative Justice asked me to write a short piece for their newsletter, about an imprisoned son who had a good father. I had a guy in mind, but it turned out that his relationship with his father was as tumultuous as most others in here.

The relationship only improved after his incarceration. It's been four days and despite approaching many guys in here, none have had that great father-son relationship my friends are asking for. The search goes on.

Meanwhile, I have a thirty-five page summary of my college studies due in a few weeks. Our chaplain was able to get fifteen of us enrolled in an accredited Bible and Seminary college about six months ago. We can earn an AA in about eighteen months if we aren't slowed by the frequent lockdowns too much. It's a great opportunity in an era where society deems it fit to deprive us of higher learning and a realistic chance at actually changing our lives around. I would like to build on this with a degree in psychology and sociology.

From what I've studied of the subjects so far, I see that one can not only learn a lot about the people around him, even those who govern his life, but also gain a better understanding of himself, which can do wonders for the self-esteem, patience and the ability to relate to others. I wish prison guards were required to take such classes. In California, all they need is a G.E.D. or high school diploma.

So in many cases you have people coming from the same backgrounds as many of us, coupled with the same mentalities, only with the power of the state behind them. As a result, pride, ego and immaturity often taint the professionalism that is expected and even lauded in society. Anyway, in spite of the feelings of being inundated, I live for the challenge. I'll get it all done, one way or the other.

As a result, pride, ego and immaturity often taint the professionalism that is expected and even lauded in society.

May 6, 2008:

Dear Lourdes, I think that's what I'll call you. I've always liked that name and since I don't know any Lourdeses personally, you will be my Lourdes. A new female friend who I can build an intimate friendship with and open up to more deeply, as opposed to sharing one with of the fellas. Though I do have a few male friends who are mature enough to share on a genuine level, many of us let bravado and our testosterone instincts get in the way of sharing on such a level.

So this'll work. And don't get all jealous, but there is one person who I can be totally real with and talk about anything, and that's my daughter. It's ironic that we have such an intimate relationship given the story above. Of course, our reunion after twelve years of separation wasn't all peaches and cream either. Having been raised by my in-laws, of which I naturally became a total anathema to, I wasn't surprised when I first received Sweet B's first "letter of curiosity." Being the wiz-kid that she is, she secretly looked me up on the Internet and wrote.

In her fourteen page letter of questions, insults, cursings and expressions of hate, mixed with distant love and admiration, she wanted to know who she is, who I am, what her mother was like, and of course, why I'd done it.

Over the course of time she conducted her own investigations, learning that much of what she had been fed were outright lies. Some out-of-the-country cousin of her mother's, for whom I don't even remember, told her a lot about me that starkly contradicted the police and family accounts of who I am.

The police labeled me a shot-caller for a street gang of high notoriety. They described me as mean and controlling, selfish and so on. I was the Devil's Arch Demon. Let them tell it.

Yet I have never been associated with a gang in all of my life, other than selling quantities of drugs to them, and any other buyer willing to pour cash into my insatiable pockets. Still, others told her I was a gentleman, and that I was generous and a hard worker (I had a legitimate landscaping business as a front for my illicit dealings and worked in retail management.)

I believe it was these facts post trial that swayed the jury to do quickly return the life without instead of the death penalty, their only two choices. In any event, Sweet B was brutally honest in that first letter and that opened the door for us to continue a mutual sharing that surpasses in depth many of the conversations I have had with adults who are much older than she.

It helped that we also have an uncanny string of common traits that go beyond genes. We even share the same favorite color, purple. We even have some of the same pet peeves and irritations. It's really a trip! Anyway, like I said, she's no threat to you, Lourdes. Though she's my lost jewel of all the earth, you will be my new treasure trove sharing on an entirely different and unique plane. Don't worry.

Excerpts From a Daily Journal of Prison Life

May 3, 2008:

I've always viewed sharing a diary to that of writing an intimate friend; sharing one's most private thoughts and not having to worry about what's popular, politically correct or offensive because diaries aren't sensitive to such matters. They just give and give, without ever taking back. So I'm rather excited about this invite by The Anne Frank Center (USA) and the Pen America Center to participate in this prison diary program.

I was quite happy to receive the materials yesterday because I've never done a diary. I keep a rather nondescript daily journal of prison activities here: lockdowns, fights, prominent visitors and a variety of triumphs or injustices but nothing close to a personal journal of my thoughts, experiences and feelings.

Those are usually shared with a variety of friends and family. Yet even there I have to edit such sharings, depending on who it is I'm sharing with. Some people are open to me sharing my faith, others aren't. Some share equally in my aloof sense of humor, while others are more serious. Still, others relate to my strong advocacy spirit, while others are socially passive or unconscious. But a diary will absorb it all, and is as flexible in personality as I am, contorting itself to each whim, caprice and facet of me. I think I will enjoy this.

After reading through the latest pages of The Beat Within and taking in all the colorful thoughts, ideas and exhilarating free verse by fellow incarcerated writers, I feel uplifted, encouraged and energized. As always, I'm impressed with the richness of imagination, opinion and sharing. Yeah, in spite of the inhumane treatment we're sometimes subjected to, we are human. We are what we think; and these collections of missives, prose and commentaries reflect the immeasurable treasure within every one of us.

read the rest of Dortel Williams' BWO piece on page 54

